

# Folklore Journal





# North Carolina Folklore Journal

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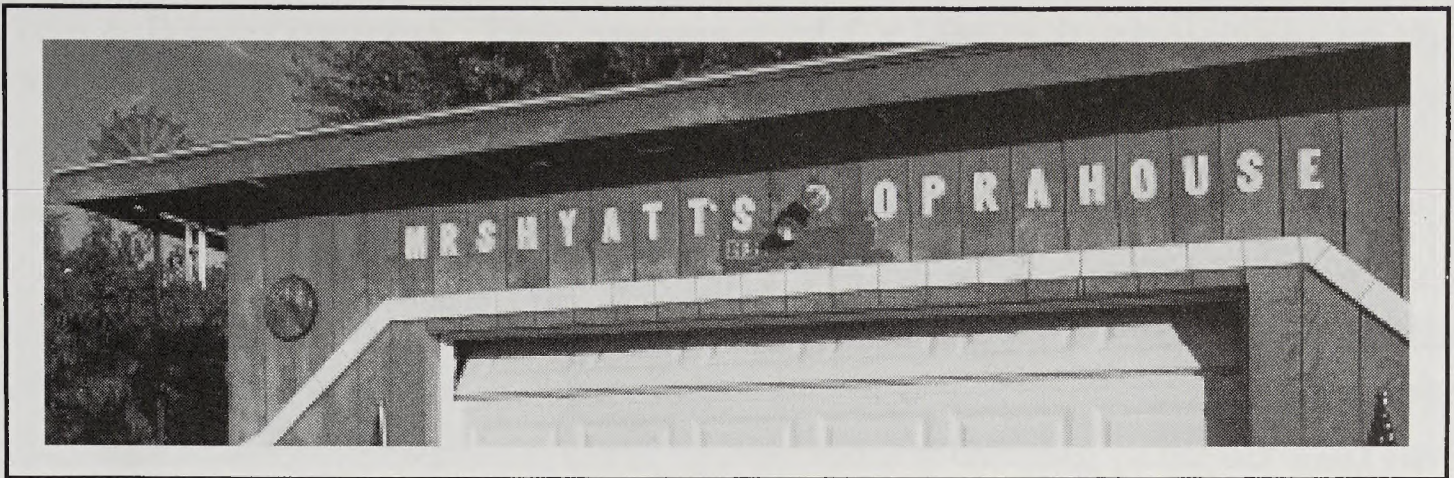
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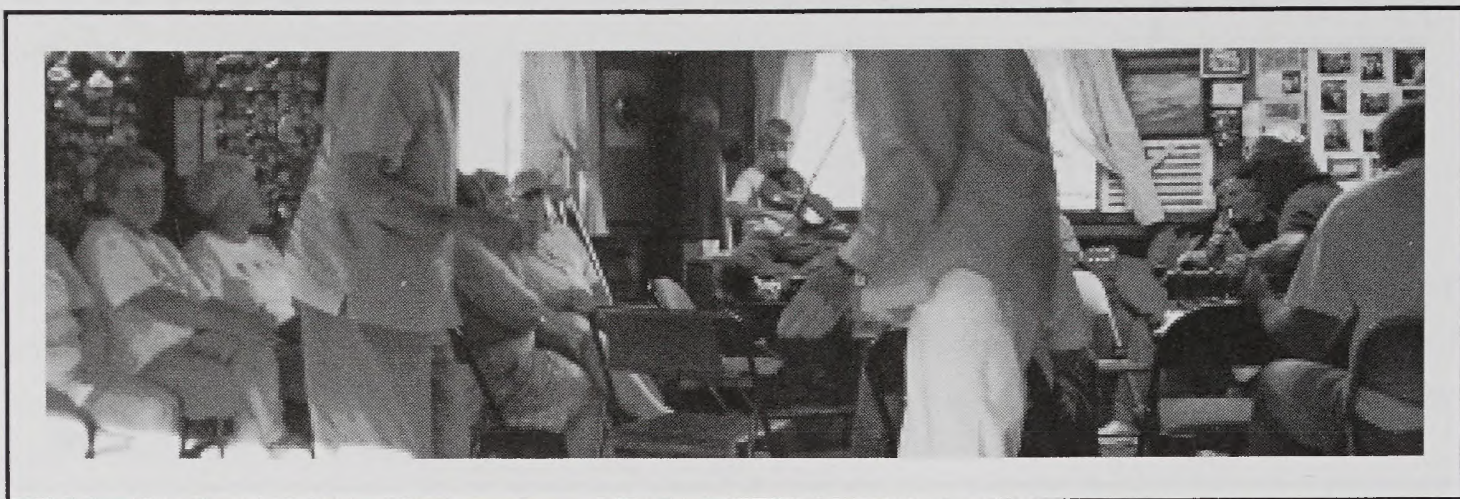
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Editor's Foreword, <i>Philip E. "Ted" Coyle</i> .....	2
2006 Brown-Hudson Folklore Awards .....	4
Dorothea Joan Moser and Janette Irene Moser: Folklorists and Musicians, <i>Beverly &amp; Dan Patterson</i> .....	4
Gary Carden: Folklorist, Playwright, and Storyteller, <i>Neal Hutcheson</i> .....	7
2006 Community Traditions Award .....	11
Mrs. Nelia Hyatt and Mrs. Hyatt's Oprahouse, <i>Kara Rogers Thomas</i> .....	11
La Virgen de Guadalupe: "Morena Moderna," <i>Diana Molina</i> .....	13
Branches of Interpretation on Turpentine Trees of Memory: Race, Landscape, and Memory in South Georgia's Turpen- tine Industry, <i>Timothy C. Prizer</i> .....	18
Bluegrass Pioneer: J.C. Kemp and the Musical Progression Toward Bluegrass in Ashe County, <i>Josh Beckworth</i> .....	38
2006 Cratis D. Williams Prize .....	49
The Folklorist's Digital Toolkit, <i>M. Anna Fariello</i> .....	50
Reviews .....	60

Cover Photos: By Diana Molina, (front) Clown, (back) Azteca, Mexico City.  
Frame Photo: Mrs. Nelia Hyatt's Oprahouse received the N.C. Folklore  
Society's 2006 Community Traditions Award. Photo by Kara Rogers Tho-  
mas.





## Editor's Foreword

By Philip E. "Ted" Coyle

This issue of the *North Carolina Folklore Journal* brings together a group of writings and images that are all related to what Barre Toelken calls the "folklore process" (32). Even though some of the material does not directly concern "dynamic interactions among human beings in communal-traditional performance contexts" (32), they are all about keeping traditions alive. First, there are the citations for the North Carolina Folklore Society's annual awards. The presentation of these awards is probably the most important thing we do as a Society, and certainly it is the most emotionally gratifying. Along with these citations are the articles, which also help us to focus on the practical actions of individuals and groups who bring treasured objects and activities into constantly emerging new worlds of human value.

Josh Beckworth's award-winning essay on "bluegrass pioneer" J.C. Kemp provides a fine example of the folklore process as it endures in a continuous "musical progression" from one group of musicians to the next in a part of our state that is well known for the richness of its folk heritage. The rootedness of this musical tradition in a particular place contrasts with the folklore process outlined by Diana Molina. Her article and photographs about the *La Virgen de Guadalupe*, which appears here in conjunction with the exhibit *Tradiciones: Latinos in the New South/Latinos en el Nuevo Sur* at the Levine Museum of the New South in Charlotte, point out the adaptability of

*Frame Photo: Dancers, musicians, and onlookers gather at Mrs. Hyatt's Oprahouse, recipient of the N.C. Folklore Society's Community Traditions Award. Photo by Kara Rogers Thomas.*



the folklore process. The presence of *La Virgen* in the pages of the *North Carolina Folklore Journal* is a reminder of the many good things that Mexican people—like all immigrants to “Our State”—bring with them to North Carolina.

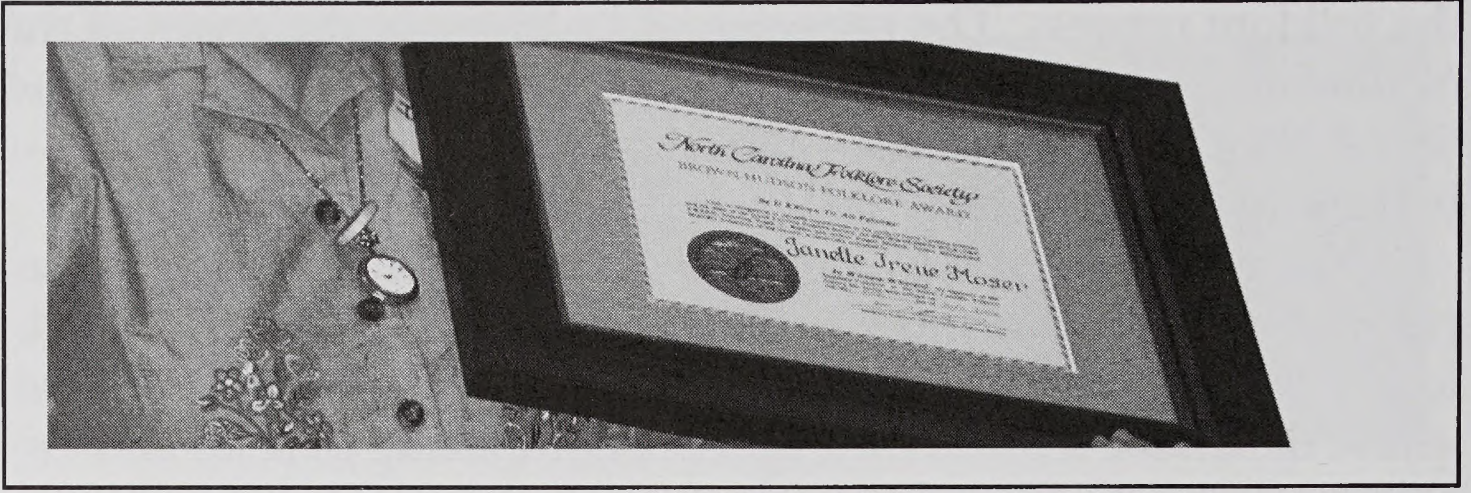
Timothy C. Prizer's article on conflicting contemporary memories of the turpentine industry in Georgia points out that the folklore process can whither away in North Carolina—ironically a state whose nickname is based on a history of producing pine tar and turpentine—while it continues to be shaped and modified in a neighboring state. But the oppressive history of the turpentine industry, and the stratified social relations that resulted from it, extended across state lines, a fact that Prizer, a graduate student in the University of North Carolina's Curriculum in Folklore, is perhaps particularly suited to interpret.

M. Anna Fariello's article on the practicalities of creating a computer database to archive folklore-related objects may seem too close to what Toelken calls the “rigid lines and fossilized structures of technical instruction or bureaucratized education” (32) to qualify as part of the folklore process, but looks can be deceiving. There is no telling how many creative individuals might dig into the Craft Revival website in order to incorporate those materials into their own “communal-traditional performance contexts.” In this issue of the *North Carolina Folklore Journal* we celebrate the folklore process in all its complexity and beauty.

#### WORK CITED

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## 2006 Brown-Hudson Folklore Awards

### Dorothea Joan Moser and Janette Irene Moser: Folklorists and Musicians

The North Carolina Folklore Society is making history. Its Brown-Hudson Folklore Award was established in 1970, and until today the folklorists nominated for it have never come from two generations of the same family. The first from this present family to receive the honor lived just down the road from here, in Buckeye Cove. His name was Artus Moser, and he received the Brown-Hudson Award in 1972. The family members to be honored with the Award today are his two daughters, Joan and Irene Moser. They also live just down the road in Buckeye Cove, as does their brother, Dr. Artus Moser, Jr., a physician in Asheville. In this fact we see some of the formative influences in the lives of Joan and Irene: the importance of family and region in their lives, and especially the importance of the cultural heritage they received from both family and region.

Theirs is an Appalachian heritage of considerable complexity. All three Moser children were born while their parents were on the faculty of Lincoln Memorial University in Harrogate, Tenn., but the family moved back to Swannanoa in 1943 and this is where both Joan and Irene grew up. Their paternal grandmother was raised over near the edge of Madison County and was a farming woman and traditional healer. Their grandfather, originally from Hickory, had come as a teenager to Buckeye Cove and in the 1890s worked in railroad construction with black prisoners and learned and sang their work songs like "John Henry" and "Swannanoa Tunnel." He worked





Irene (l) and Joan Moser play music as part of the awards program at the annual meeting of the North Carolina Folklore Society, March 2006, Black Mountain, N.C. Photo by Ted Coyle.

most of his life as a forester—for the Biltmore Estate and for the State. Embracing this background, Artus Moser and his wife Mabel developed a deep love of nature. In an interview recorded for the Blue Ridge Parkway, Joan recalled that her father would say: “Take your walking stick and sort of tap the ground ahead of you and watch where you’re going, because you may find snakes. Don’t kill the snakes; just avoid stepping on them.” He would show the children artifacts he found as he gardened and say: “These are Cherokee things. They had a balance with nature. They didn’t destroy. They took care of the land.” Artus and Mabel inspired their children to share this love of nature.

Both parents were also college graduates with intellectual interests—she particularly in botany, and he in history, art, and folklore. Artus, in fact, pursued graduate study at UNC, the University of Wisconsin, the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, and the Chicago Art Institute. Both Artus and Mabel taught school most of their adult lives, and Artus enthusiastically collected folklore in many parts of the Appalachians, making extensive recordings for the Library of Congress. The children grew up knowing many of the traditional



musicians and folklorists in the region. The three Moser children followed their parents' lead in seeking higher education, and Joan and Irene, like their father, in using it to study Appalachian traditions. Joan took an A.B. at UNC-Greensboro and a master's degree in Music at UNC-Chapel Hill. Her thesis grew out of fieldwork with Appalachian musicians like Marcus Martin and Byard Ray, both of them family friends. It was one of the earliest ever written on American traditional fiddling. Irene took a bachelor's degree in English at Vassar College, a Master of Science in Library Science at UNC-Chapel Hill, a Master of Arts in Folklore and Mythology at UCLA, and a Ph.D. in English with a Minor in Folklore at UNC-Chapel Hill. Her dissertation was a study of contemporary Native American novels. She is probably the only person in the region to combine a reading knowledge of Latin, Anglo-Saxon, French, and Cherokee.

If Joan and Irene gladly learned, they also, like their parents, gladly taught. Joan has spent most of her career at Warren Wilson College. She was invited there in 1977 to start an Appalachian Studies program. From the first it was a great success and grew to an eight-course "minor," in which Joan taught an Introduction to Appalachian studies and other courses on Appalachian Folk Arts; Folktales and Storytelling; and Contemporary American Folklife. Irene's career led her farther afield, both in subject and geography. She has served as a librarian—usually also with an appointment as a teacher—at Brevard and Mars Hill Colleges and the University of North Carolina at Asheville. She has taught English composition and literature at UNC-Chapel Hill and Western Carolina University and also in West Virginia at Marshall University and at Mountain State University. Her courses also have included a wide range of Folklore and Appalachian Studies subjects. After retirement, she has come full circle, continuing to teach as an adjunct instructor at Warren Wilson College and Western Carolina University. One of her courses at Warren Wilson College is Native American Folklore and Mythology. As academics, both sisters have taken on numerous related enterprises. At Mountain State University Irene served for seven years as project coordinator of a notable series of public presentations by writers, tale-tellers, folklorists, and activists called "Appalachian Visions." Joan was one of the first Chairpersons of the Appalachian Studies Association, and she co-edited a volume called *Critical Essays in Appalachian Life and Culture* in 1982 and another in 1996 entitled *Appalachian Folk Medicine: Native Plants and Healing Traditions*. But to leaven all this academic work, Irene and her husband Bob Shepard have long been



dance enthusiasts, and both sisters (together with their brother) have performed Appalachian music as The Buckeye Band of Swannanoa.

Two recent actions, in which their brother Artus joined Joan and Irene, underscore how deeply rooted all their work has been in family and place. The first is that the Moser children donated their father's papers to the Southern Folklife Collection in the library at UNC-Chapel Hill to insure the preservation and accessibility of the materials for future generations. The other is that the three have also put the two hundred acres they inherited in Buckeye Cove into the Nature Conservancy. "That's our way of following what our parents tried to encourage us to do—have a special relationship with the land," Joan said in her Blue Ridge Parkway interview. The North Carolina Folklore Society is pleased to honor Joan and Irene Moser for the many ways in which they have served their family and regional heritage and for the principles that have motivated their work.

—Beverly and Dan Patterson  
Chapel Hill, North Carolina

## Gary Carden: Folklorist, Playwright, and Storyteller

Gary Carden has the ability to convey the heart and vitality of oral history, breathing life into the stories and characters of his community's lore. He has spent a lifetime doing so. On the dust-jacket of Carden's award-winning *Mason Jars in the Flood*, Kay Byer writes, "For the ancient tribal story-tellers, words brought the world into existence: without stories, we would not know where, or who, we are. Without Gary Carden, I would not have known quite so clearly where I was when I moved to these mountains over thirty years ago."

Like Cratis Williams, Carden has become a spokesperson for the region that shaped him. His insight on his native culture provided the ballast for the PBS documentary *Mountain Talk* (Hutcheson), for the three-part PBS special, *The Appalachians* (Evening Star Productions) and for a forthcoming History Channel production on Appalachia.

Brought up by his grandparents, elders of an earlier generation of mountain folk, in a "house filled with the past," as Byer puts it, Carden was steeped from birth in untainted mountain culture, lore, and language. Carden relates telling his first stories to the leghorn

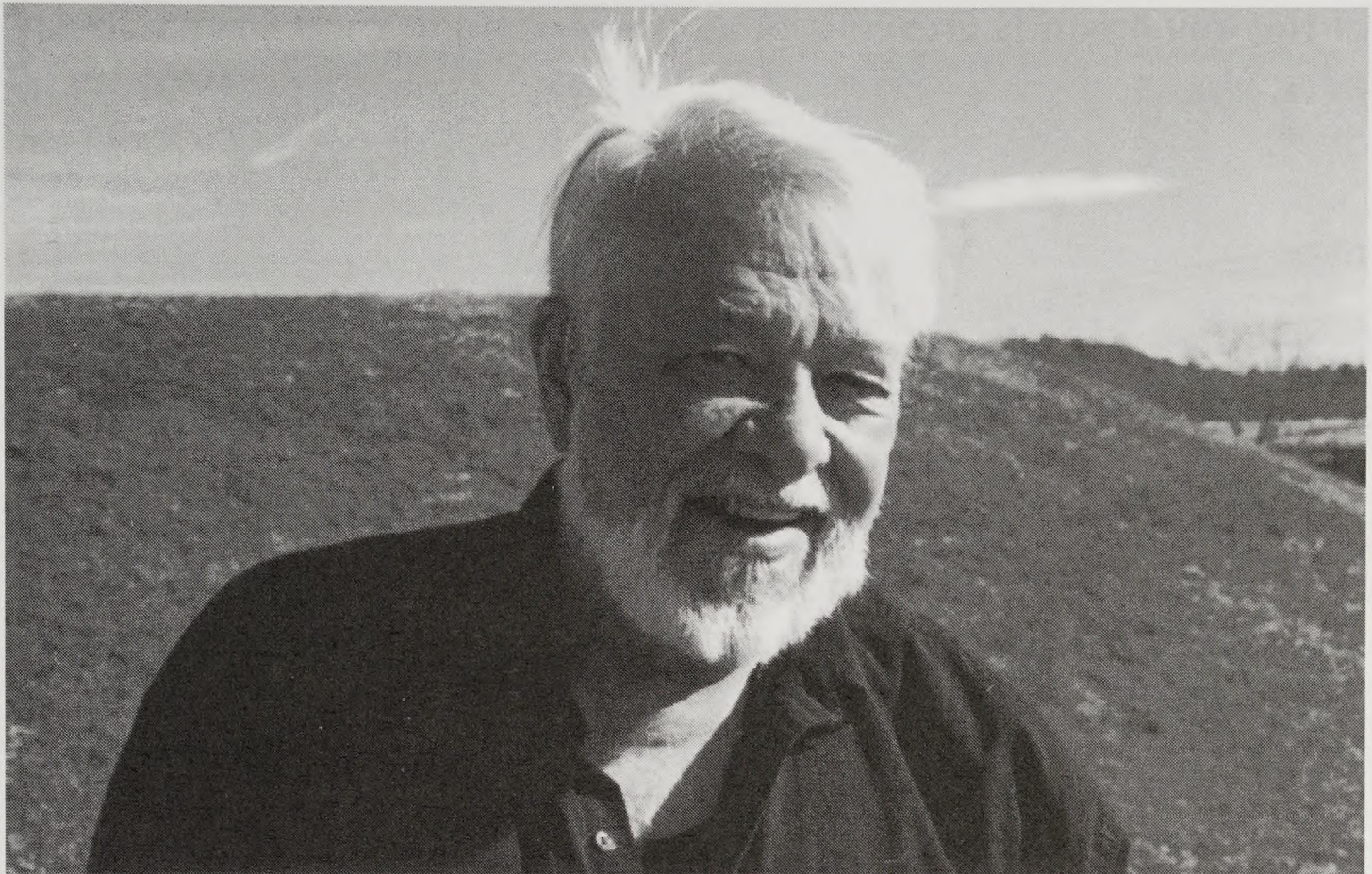


chickens in the chicken-house at age six. He reports that his audience “wasn’t attentive and tended to get hysterical during the dramatic parts.” Later he would re-tell community happenings and stories, and tales from his ‘funny books,’ to more attentive kids at school. His saturation in the culture was soon complemented by an insatiable appetite for literature, beginning with ‘funny books’ and increasingly turning to folklore and Appalachian studies, ultimately propelling him to an unlikely education at Western Carolina University. From such beginnings Carden became the vehicle of his region’s oral heritage.

I recall Lee Smith calling Carden the best unpublished writer she’d ever met, prior to the appearance of Gary Carden and Nina Anderson’s remarkable collection of Appalachian history, stories and legends, *Belled-Buzzards, Hucksters, and Grieving Spectors*. On the publication of Carden’s *Mason Jars in the Flood*, Smith added her own dust-jacket quote: “Gary Carden is a national treasure—an Appalachian Garrison Keillor! ... These stories are little miracles; sweet, sad, funny and smart, all told in some of the loveliest language that’s ever been put on a page.” On the same dust-jacket, Fred Chappell wrote, “I know the folks of the western North Carolina mountains and Mr. Carden knows them too...he tells their stories, passes on their humor and sadness, and hears their music.”

Like Paul Green, Carden has investigated and evoked his native region in drama, rendering real-life presentations of the characters of mountain history and folklore, as documented in *The Raindrop Waltz and Other Plays*. In these plays, Carden captures and conveys the authentic folk culture of an earlier era, but he also perpetuates folk custom in the telling—in the transmission of his community’s history as experienced from the ground. His first play, *The Uktena*, vividly brings to life Cherokee legends of his native region. His second play, *The Raindrop Waltz*, is a gem of oral history from Jackson County, recounting the era of his own childhood and the years just prior. *Birdell* captures the story and the spirit of an 86-year-old woman who lived in Hazel Creek from 1914 until the TVA flooded the region. In an intimate and accessible way, this play explores one story of many about removals and other hardships placed on Appalachians by TVA works projects and the establishment of the Smoky Mountains National Park, hardships that helped shape present-day Appalachian thinking about their powerlessness relative to the U.S. Government and the outside world. *Nance Dude* tells the story of another actual character in Appalachian memory, a Haywood County woman who was convicted of killing her granddaughter in 1913. Ac-





Appalachian storyteller Gary Carden. Photo by Neal Hutcheson.

tress Elizabeth Westall provides her own testimony in a letter she sent to me, “For the past ten years I have known and worked with Gary Carden. Our relationship exists on two planes: first, playwright and actress; second as fellow natives of Appalachia. In *The Raindrop Waltz*, *Nance Dude*, and *Birdell* I have been touched by the sensitivity and beautiful simplicity of his words: ‘Sometimes I sit out here in the evenings and watch the darkness come. I try to remember all the things that have happened to me, so much misery. And I try to remember if somewhere in all that darkness there was a day—or even an hour—that lifted my heart’ (*Nance Dude*). Or the delicate way he handles love: ‘I seen my nightgown float away; Dude took my hand and then that reflection in the water broke into a million pieces as we wandered into the deep water together’ (*Nance Dude*). Gary portrays the mountain people with great devotion and compassion but also with uncompromising honesty. He reveals their unwillingness, or inability, to make long-range plans; their strange, sometimes difficult to understand speech patterns; their clannishness; their strength; their independence; their stoicism; their love of the mountain land. He makes me and all his listeners proud to be a part of these mountains.”

Carden’s most recent work, *The Prince of Dark Corners*, tells the story of the notorious bootlegger Lewis Redmond and of a devastated Appalachia in the years after the Civil War. This play is also an exploration of the Appalachian archetype of the outlaw as hero, and



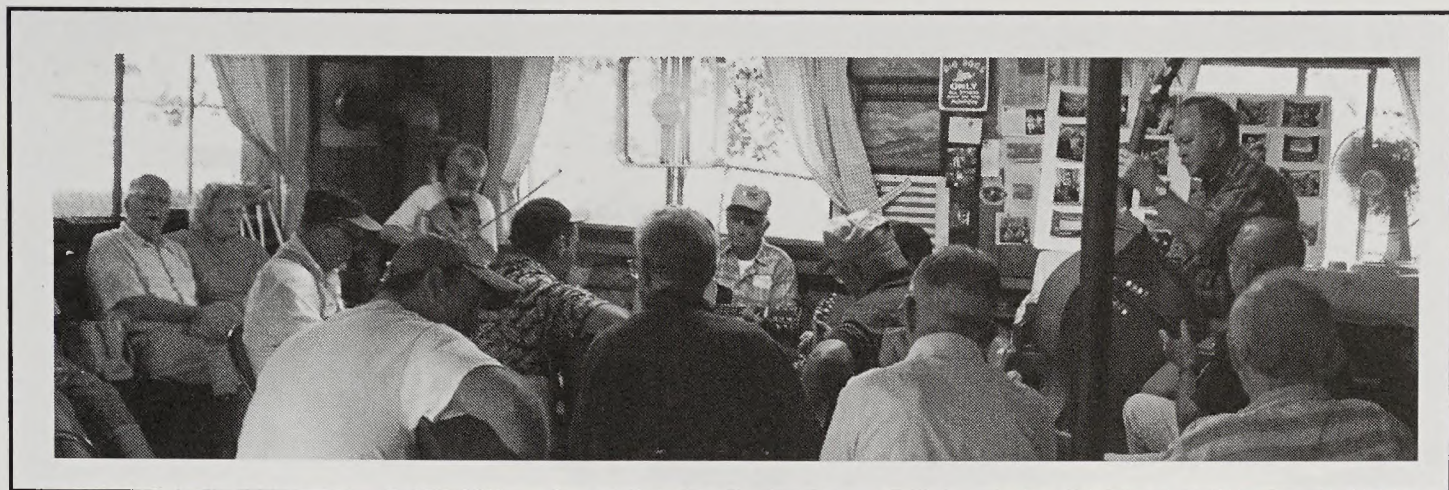
of the way legends grew out of all proportion to their source in Appalachia, as in the Old West. *Dark Corners* has drawn praise from all quarters, including these remarks to me from novelist Charles Price: "Gary Carden once again shows us why he's possibly the bravest and most truthful of those who write about Southern Appalachian themes. Gary still dares to draw from the whole of our expansive and rough-hewn heritage at a time when literary fashion wants to trim it down to drawing-room size and housebreak it... But if they stamp on this one, believe me, they'll be crushing a masterpiece." Jeff Minick of the Smoky Mountain News wrote (April 20, 2005), "*The Prince of Dark Corners* should remind all of us how powerfully poetic mountain speech once was and how storytelling on a front porch was once as much a part of the culture as is the television in the den today. Carden uses Lewis Redmond, a rascal of a man who became a folk hero to people in both Carolinas in the 1880s, to convey the English language as it once was used, a source of entertainment and folk wisdom."

Like John Parris, Carden has also had a hand in preserving and transmitting Cherokee history and traditions, as in the aforementioned play *The Uktena* and in the recorded version of his told stories, *The Cherokee Stories* (1992). Also like Parris, Carden writes a regular newspaper column (in the Smoky Mountain News) on mountain culture and folklore. The Sylva Herald, too, carries a monthly column by Carden called *The Storyteller*, which usually deals with some aspect of local history, and he has also been writing columns for the Franklin Press on such old traditions as serenading, heavenly crowns, and madstones. Carden has taught Elderhostel for twenty-five years, teaching a number of popular courses on folklore and Appalachian literature, history and storytelling, as well as courses on the Brothers Grimm, Thomas Wolfe, and the Trail of Tears.

In all of his efforts, writings, dramatic works, and storytelling appearances, Gary Carden has demonstrated and conveyed a unique understanding of Appalachian folklore and history, interpreting and transmitting that heritage to new audiences, thereby sustaining a venerable tradition. He reminds us that folklore is a living history, into which a community pours its experiences and identity, reminding itself who it is and how it got there. It is time to recognize Gary Carden as one of North Carolina's treasures.

—Neal Hutcheson  
North Carolina State University





## 2006 Community Traditions Award

### Mrs. Nelia Hyatt and Mrs. Hyatt's Oprahouse

Mrs. Nelia Hyatt, of Asheville, North Carolina, has hosted a traditional music jam featuring old time, bluegrass, and early country music on her property for more than fifty years. While such longevity would be notable for any regular music event, Mrs. Hyatt's jam is particularly significant because she is not a musician—her jam is a labor of love for the music and the people who play it.

Mrs. Hyatt's husband, a railroad man and talented musician and instrument maker, began the jam many decades ago while working long hours with the railroad. Music was in his blood, and his wife understood that his attachment to the music and the culture of musicians that gathered at their home went well beyond a simple leisurely pursuit. She enthusiastically supported his passion, and the musicians and their families that gathered at the Hyatt home as often as Mr. Hyatt's workload permitted soon became Mrs. Hyatt's extended family. Those bonds deepened after her husband's retirement, when the couple decided to convert their garage into a comfortable jamming space and to welcome all comers to a weekly Thursday evening jam.

For a brief time following her husband's death, the Thursday night gathering was put on hold, and few expected the jam to continue. Not wanting to disappoint those loyal musicians who had made a habit of visiting the jam, Mrs. Hyatt spoke to some of those musicians telling them how she would like to continue the weekly tradition. With their help, and with the assistance of Mrs. Hyatt's own

*Frame photo: Mrs. Hyatt's Oprahouse is a gathering place for musicians, young and old, in Asheville, N.C. Photo by Kara Rogers Thomas.*





Mrs. Nelia Hyatt displays the 2006 Community Traditions Award at the North Carolina Folklore Society's annual meeting. Pictured with her are (l) Glenn Bannerman, Eva Willis Clontz, and Evan N. Reilly. Photo by Ted Coyle.

family members, those Thursday night jams have become an Asheville institution. Visit Mrs. Hyatt's Oprahouse on Thursday evenings—used as a garage on any other night of the week—and one might find up to fifty musicians and dancers sharing dinner and pickin' tunes. Despite the season, when health permits, Mrs. Hyatt goes out of her way to greet newcomers, welcoming them to the jam and asking them to sign her guest book.

Mrs. Hyatt has provided a safe musical environment for four generations of musicians. Musicians who play there often describe the family-like atmosphere of the Thursday night jam. At ease in that setting, older and experienced players perpetuate traditional tunes and musical styles by encouraging young and beginning musicians to jump into the fray and play along. Buck dancers quickly change into their dancing shoes when the musicians strike their first dance tune. Around the jam's perimeter, non-musicians listen and catch up on the latest gossip. Attendants vary in age from newborn to ninety years. They hold in common a love for the music and a deep adoration and respect for Mrs. Nelia Hyatt, the force behind the jam.

—Kara Rogers Thomas  
Frostburg State University





## La Virgen de Guadalupe: “Morena Moderna”

By Diana Molina

Our Lady of Guadalupe is one of the most venerated symbols of our time. She emerges from a complex mixture of cultural differences that began with the Spanish and the Moors and continued with the Conquistadors and the Aztecs. According to legend, “La Virgen Morena,” the brown-skinned Madonna, was the first miraculous apparition in Mexico soon after the arrival of the Spanish. The Virgin Mary appeared to Juan Diego, an Aztec convert to Catholicism, upon the sacred grounds of the shrine to *Tonantzin*, the Aztec earth goddess of fertility. Surrounded by brilliant sunlight, and draped in a cloak of starlight, the earth-toned Madonna-with-child left her imprint on his cloak. Epitomizing womanhood, her image personified a universal spirit of love, hope, compassion and humble strength. In a time of great crisis she appeared as a chaste protective mother,

*Diana Molina is a writer and photographer based in New Mexico who has published feature articles for various international magazines including Elle, Esquire, GEO, GQ, Marie Claire, National Geographic, and Vogue. A series of her essays has been distributed throughout the world by GAMMA Photo Agency in Paris. Exhibits of her photography have been shown at venues including the World Museum of Art in Rotterdam, Holland; the Art Museum of the Americas in Washington, D.C.; the Houston Museum of Natural Science; the Institute of Texan Cultures at the University of Texas at San Antonio; and the Albuquerque Museum of Natural History and Science. Molina is currently working on a collection of work titled Seven String Barbed-Wire Fence, focusing on the many faces of Latino Immigration in the United States. This new work can be previewed on her website: <[www.dianamolina.com](http://www.dianamolina.com)>.*





IWFR, Durham, North Carolina. In the Autumn of 2003, the Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride carried busloads of immigrants from across the United States to Capitol Hill to voice concerns about unfair labor treatment. At the rally held when two buses stopped in Durham, N.C. the icon was carried in a manner reminiscent of the 1960's marches led by Cesar Chavez and The United Farmworkers Union. Harnessing the power of her unifying force, modern movements continue to enlist her aid as the Divine Protectress in their ceaseless struggles.

Spanish-style. As the legend spread, the indigenous people of Mexico integrated her colonial origins with the spiritual realm of Tonantzin. Her image became a synthesis of complex, evolving ideas of spiritual, political and racial identity.

Today, La Morena Moderna has gained a unique mythic and aesthetic relevance as a transnational emblem. In contemporary society, she is not only a spiritual symbol infused with sociopolitical importance, but appears integrated in the commercialism and marketing of our times. La Virgen de Guadalupe is a symbol that asserts the primacy of the spiritual over the material. With altars, processions, dances, song and prayers, communities throughout the Americas gather with indulgent devotion to commemorate her. Representations of Guadalupe appear in an incredible variety of styles, forms and textures, each rendition a unique combination of personal vision and local culture. Her image appears on murals, body tattoos





On a backroad of the borderlands, a striking stained glass in Sanderson, Texas, radiates the brilliance of the setting sun.

and low-rider automobiles as well as in churches, museums and markets. Street names, proper names, counties, towns, rivers and parks named in her honor also attest to her influence. Finding Guadalupe present throughout my travels in Mexico and here in North Carolina, I began to document the modern-day phenomenon, revealing a spectrum of traditional, kitschy, and avant-garde occurrences. As a modern symbol of empowerment, she inspires an impassioned and universal fervor, glimpses of which I catch through my photography.



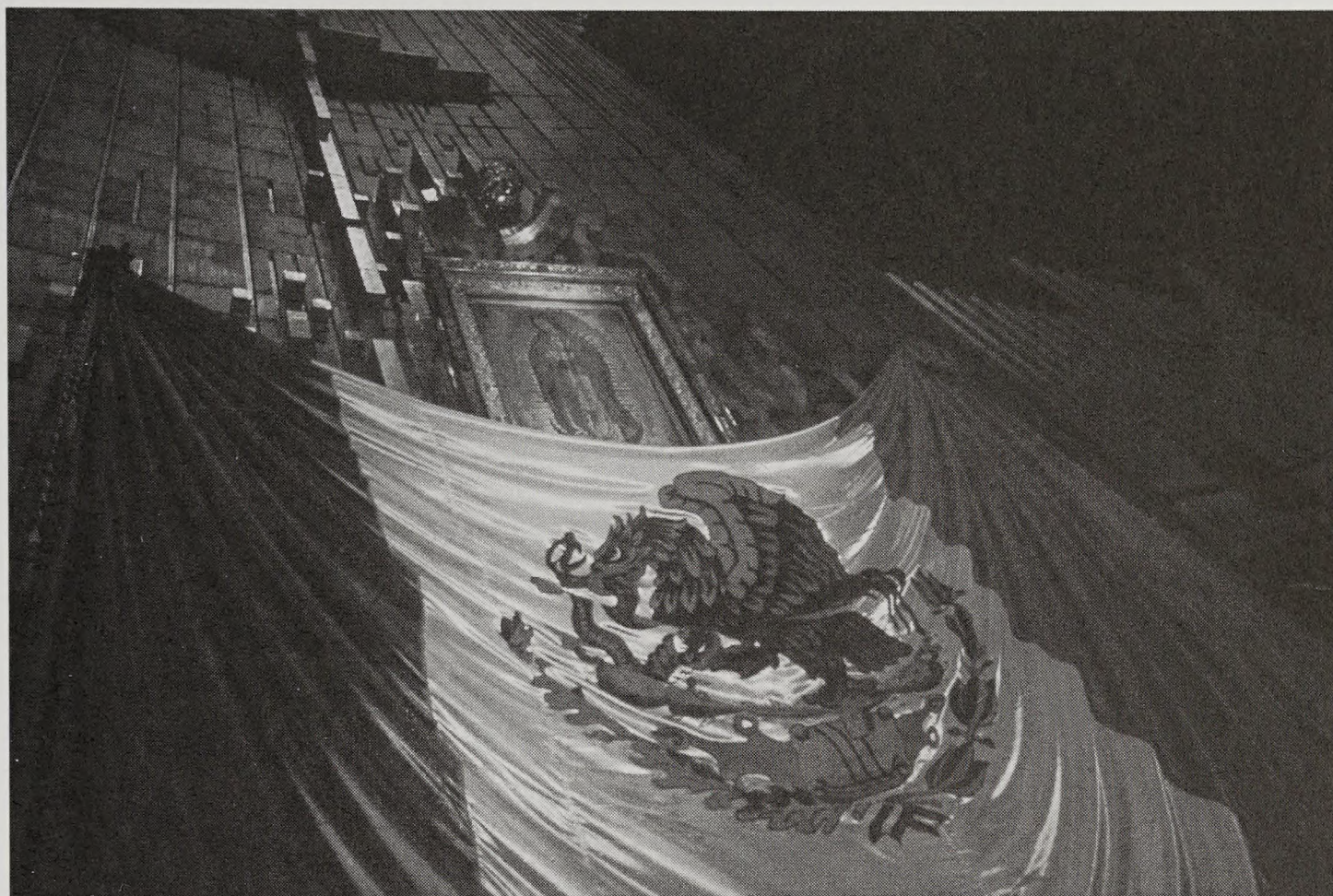


Macho con Falda Volante / Macho with a Flying Skirt, Mexico City. Matachines congregate from many regions and states to dance in honor of La Virgen de Guadalupe on her feast day, each with their own unique style and cadence.



Recuerdo de Mi Visita / Souvenir of My Visit, Mexico City. For 60 pesos a local photographer is available year-round at the Villa to document visits to the sacred site with an instant Polaroid.





In July 2002, Pope John Paul II traveled to Mexico City for the Catholic Church's official recognition of Juan Diego's sainthood.



Dia de los Muertos, El Paso, Texas. During the Day of the Dead celebrations in El Paso, Café Mayapan and La Mujer Obrera create an altar dedicated to the many murdered women in Juarez, Mexico across the border and hold a procession for all departed souls. La Mujer Obrera, is a non-profit organization initially created to unite and improve the condition of garment-workers in the El Paso Community.





## Branches of Interpretation on Turpentine Trees of Memory: Race, Landscape, and Memory in South Georgia's Turpentine Industry

By Timothy C. Prizer

"Branches of Interpretation on Turpentine Trees of Memory" is drawn from fieldwork that I conducted over a three-year period with former turpentine woodsmen in South Georgia as part of the South Georgia Folklife Project. My fieldwork in this area began in 2001, the same year that the last bucket of raw pine gum for the commercial production of turpentine was dipped in the United States. Admittedly, researching a defunct rural Southern industry like this one presented me at first with some discomfort. It seemed to fit all too comfortably into the survivalist approach to folklore studies, whereby the emphasis of our efforts is placed upon the documentation of tradition and culture before the people who "bear" this information pass away. Along *with* them, the argument goes, so too does their expressive culture.

Theories of residual culture, I was aware, can present us with a situation in which our field becomes based on the disappearance of

*Frame Photo: Turpentine Drive in Portal, Georgia marks the location of the Carter Turpentine Still and the Catface Country Turpentine Festival. Photo by Timothy C. Prizer*

*Tim Prizer is a student in the Curriculum in Folklore at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He currently resides in Atlanta, where he is working with the Southern Arts Federation and completing his Master's thesis on race, memory, and critical nostalgia in the now-defunct turpentine industry of South Georgia and North Florida.*



its subject (Ben-Amos 14). But it soon became clear to me that not only did *somebody* need to look into this incredibly under-researched group of American workers, but also that folklorists are wise not to avoid the sorts of topics that some would argue have become our discipline's own worst enemy. Only our focus and our purpose need to be reconsidered. While survival is no longer a definitive characteristic of things "folk," it is undeniable that some folklorists – like myself in this case – deal with certain groups that have come under forms of economic, political, or social pressure that threaten their sustainability, and the logic goes, the continued existence of their expressive culture. My aim is to show that folklorists are free of this limited perspective through an analysis of the ways recently defunct groups such as South Georgia turpentiners use the past and tradition to actively express feelings in the present. Focusing on the symbolic representation of memory, I will demonstrate how rhetoric is employed in folk expression not only to combat exoteric forces, but to express variable interpretations of the past and reveal in-group factionalism with concern to memory.

The South Georgia piney woods were once an arena in which an occupational culture based on the production of turpentine flourished. Originally termed "naval stores," the industry was one of the first in the New World, beginning in Jamestown in the early seventeenth century, migrating southward along the eastern seaboard into the Carolinas as a form of slave labor, and finally settling in southern Georgia and northern Florida, where it would dominate local economies from the 1880s to the 1950s. In its final locale, the turpentine industry revolved on cheap African-American labor forced into mostly isolated camps by a system of debt peonage. Even after Emancipation, the industry was divided, generally speaking, along divisions of race, in which white producers, woodsriders, and timber owners found relatively comfortable economic standing in their governance of debt-ridden black laborers. Stetson Kennedy, who conducted fieldwork with Zora Neale Hurston for the WPA on a Cross City, Florida turpentine camp in the 1930s, wrote of his findings:

More than any other occupational group, these Negroes are denied the rights for which the Civil War was supposedly fought. As one who knows told me, "A Negro who is foolish enough to go to work in a turpentine camp is simply signing away his birthright." (Kennedy 261)

In the second half of the twentieth century, the Civil Rights Movement and a general economic trend of rural outsourcing and for-



eign labor led to a sharp decline in domestic turpentine production. High timber prices, labor costs, and alternative industrial sources of turpentine also accelerated the industry's decline in the United States. By the late 1970s, few large-scale turpentine operations existed in this country, and in August 2001, Major Phillips of Soperton, Georgia dipped the last barrel of raw pine gum for commercial turpentine production in the United States (Prizer 1-2).

As the industry has passed from the American occupational landscape, the opportunity appears limited for the dynamic and continuous production of cultural expression among turpentiners in the United States. Since we can no longer enter the woods to witness the calls and hollers, the competitions, and the natural rhythms of the workday, the temptation is to imagine that we can only conceptualize the folklore of turpentiners retrospectively or as what Bauman calls "superorganic tradition," thought to be carried by tradition bearers "like so much baggage" (33). It would be easy for ethnographers to leave this research in the static, historical realm, sentencing it and their subjects to a dusty life in the archives. It would also be unfortunate.

The importance of the past to the study of folklore is that there is a point of convergence in which history meets the present and sheds light on the importance of attitudes toward both. Far from limiting us to a dependency on the past, folklore, Donald Brenneis writes, "can help us understand those very particular *events* through which the past is understood" (299, emphasis mine). Turpentine provides one clear example of Brenneis' claim. One method of analyzing how the past is enacted in the present is to look at the ways turpentiners choose to memorialize—or *not* to memorialize—the passing of their industry. Here, in looking to the symbolic representation of memory, we find emergent performances of the past in the present as a means of commenting on the future. "The realities of the past," Eber and Neal note, "take on special meaning through our current perceptions of them, and the future becomes a mixture of present fears and aspirations" (9). The concept of nostalgia, a central one for some turpentiners, by definition involves an ambiguous relationship with time; it gazes longingly to the past, is expressed in the present, and makes predictions for the future. Nostalgia is, in Roger Abrahams' words, "the sense of loss that occurs at the marked intersections between the past and the present" (19).

In the symbolic representation of memory, individuals construct their reality based on the interpretation of life's events and, from





Gillis Carter of Willacoochee, Georgia, displays the lid of an old wooden turpentine barrel. The lid is one of many artifacts and tools that he stores in the “museum” housed in one of his barns. Photo by Timothy C. Prizer.

that reality, create a symbol system to describe their world (Eber and Neal). Though no two turpentiners ever experienced the industry in precisely the same manner, a general pattern has emerged in the years following its demise in which nostalgia is expressed along racial lines, with the white population generally expressing its feelings of loss in romantic terms and African Americans conveying mixed emotions of loss and relief. For an example of the response of those who found employment in the turpentine industry the most rewarding – usually white producers and woodsriders – we turn to Gillis Carter, a 64-year-old Willacoochee, Georgia native who grew up working turpentine alongside his father and who employed several African-American men to work on his turpentine farm. Carter demonstrates his strong sense of pride and nostalgia for the turpentine industry in a more public way than perhaps any other former turpentiner. Disturbed that the scarred trees that once lined the South Georgia roadsides are now virtually nonexistent, Carter has converted four pines in his front yard into turpentine trees in order to symbolically express his feelings of loss through visual narrative. He selected the trees in front of his house based on their visibility from the highway.



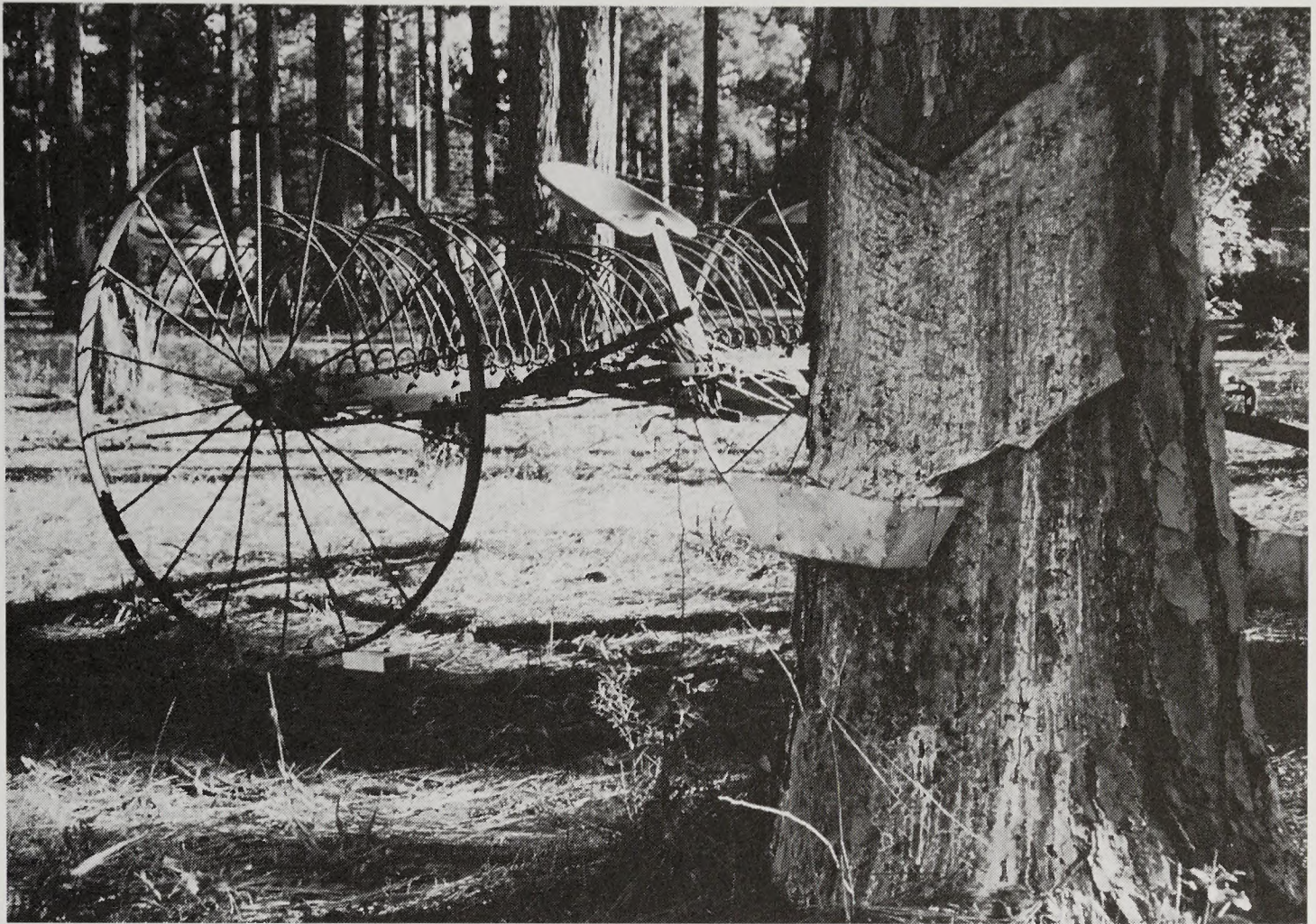


Gillis Carter carves a fresh streak into one of the “catfaced” pines in his front yard. Photo by Timothy C. Prizer.

One of the last people in the United States to continue to tap pine trees for the extraction of crude gum, he marks the trees as a persuasive technique to jog the memories of passers-by in order to create a sense of the communal past. In doing so, he literally *carves* out meaning and uses the landscape as a canvas for the depiction of memory.

Linkon and Russo, using the demise of the steel industry in Youngstown, Ohio as their subject, have shown that the alteration of landscape for the purposes of representing memory can produce especially emotional reactions (17). A number of studies, especially in the field of cultural geography, have revealed that meaning often abounds in the placement of such physical markings as memorials, whether thrust to the margins or conspicuously positioned like Carter’s trees. Etymologically, in fact, the word *geography* translates to “earth writing,” or any form of inscription in the landscape. As the cultural geographer Kenneth Foote has demonstrated, landscape is most accurately understood as “a sort of communicational resource, a system of signs and symbols, capable of extending the temporal and spatial range of communication. In effect, the physical durability of landscape permits it to carry meaning into the future so as to help sustain memory and cultural traditions” (33). Gillis Carter thus communicates the type of sentiments commonly represented in ephemeral oral expression, but like the written word, he creates what is ultimately a more





Former turpentine Gillis Carter has converted four of the pine trees in his front yard into turpentine trees to remind passers-by of the turpentine industry's historical significance to the region. The scarification of the trees is referred to as a "catface," as the marks are said to resemble a cat's whiskers.

"durable, visual representation" in his use of the physical landscape (Foote 33).

When landscapes change, memories are strengthened through nostalgia. As large timber companies continue to uproot natural conifers and plant ship-shape rows of scrawny pines along the highways and back roads of the South, Gillis Carter seeks reprisal in the symbol of the natural standing pine, slashed into the veins in order to convey the intersection of work and history. He explains his purpose for maintaining the trees in these terms:

I reckon, next to my love for the Lord Jesus, I just love turpentineing...And I just grown a fondness for it, and I just wanted to cut those trees out there and chip them for people that passes this highway out here, that they might stop and show it to their kids...It's something that I would like to see kept alive fifty years down the road...We've got a generation of children that's twenty-two or twenty-four years old that's never seen a [cat]face. (G. Carter)

Carter illustrates that the trees in his yard are principally didactic expressions for the young or unacquainted, and they also serve to





As natural-standing timber becomes less common in South Georgia, former turpentine Gillis Carter uses the natural pines in his front yard to convey the intersection of work and memory.

remind people who may forget that the industry once occupied a central role in the region. To meet similar ends, he also maintains a sort of museum of old turpentine tools and equipment in one of his barns. As a self-proclaimed “advocate of the turpentine industry,” he recognizes that it is something very few people can do today. He enjoys when people are interested in his involvement with the turpentine industry and approach him with comments such as, “They tell me you used to dip tar, or you know how to pull, or you know how to chip, or you know how to tack up a tin.” Turpentine, he recognizes, is a “gone art” (G. Carter).

But Carter’s primary purpose for maintaining these trees is their educative and persuasive power. They function as rhetoric intended to engage an audience in visual narrative, even if that audience is whipping by at sixty miles per hour. Drawing from Kenneth Burke, Roger Abrahams reflected upon folklore’s rhetorical nature in 1968, noting that folklore often functions as “an implement of argument, a tool of persuasion” that is “enacted by a performer who tries to use it to affect an audience in some way” (Abrahams 146). Gillis Carter engages in the maintenance of trees for reasons far more complex than any mere personal attachment to the work. It is a concerted



effort to broadcast his feelings of nostalgia about turpentine's disappearance and to instigate a productive response from those who pass by. With his trees, Carter hopes to spark a common concern for what he perceives as a dying agrarian lifestyle, lending a more literal sense to Abrahams' assertion that persuasive traditional expression "asks for some kind of sympathetic reaction" from an audience (Abrahams 146). Carter's sense of loss represents what he sees as a social problem made more bearable through vernacular expression and the sympathy it provokes. Though one of Carter's goals, as he explains, is to have others know that he worked in the woods as a turpentine, his core objective is to engage people in the collective action of memory, thus reaffirming community and engaging individuals in collective concern.

Abrahams' argument is valuable for its demonstration of the ways individuals use vernacular expression to persuade. Yet, writing in the late 1960s, his point was to show how rhetoric functions to maintain structure and solidarity within groups. He aimed to view "items of lore as functional objects," highlighting the collective "values and attitudes" of "specific groups" (Abrahams 157). Of course, we and Abrahams now know that vernacular activity often serves to disrupt the very harmony it is held to maintain. Abrahams' early argument assumes, as Edmund Leach has shown to be the case for scholars of myth as well, "that whatever may be the local tensions and oppositions within a social system, the overall structure is somehow in equilibrium" (Leach 198). From this foundation, Abrahams then analyzed the techniques members of bound folk groups employ to "attack" outside forces that "threaten the existence of the group" (Abrahams 146). Admittedly, Carter's pines could be said to confront the forces that have erased turpentine from the American landscape, but his expressions do not fit into the neat, homogenous compartments that structuralist arguments like Abrahams' put forth. In-group factionalism as well often spawns the use of rhetoric, disordering the structure from within rather than uniting it against forces from without. The trees may be a symbol of collective memory in that they stimulate recollection among all involved in the industry, but they do not produce consensus on the composition of that memory. Rather than "collective memory," as it is generally understood, we are confronted with various communities of memory in which symbolic representations are inherently multiplex. "Collective" memory, then, ultimately comes down to the individual: "Although the cumulative experiences of a given group of people shape their basic design for living," Eber



and Neal write, "it is the individual's definition of the situation that shapes the immediate course of action he or she is likely to follow" (3).

Given the turpentine industry's history of racial division, representations of memory likewise reflect a significant degree of disjunction. Carter's symbols, if taken out of the context of his intention, are deeply ambiguous and could suggest multiple narratives. As Stuart Hall reminds us, "the meaning of a cultural form and its place or position in the cultural field is not inscribed inside its form" (Hall 235). Any sign, Carter's arboreal one serving the present case, "may delimit a range of meanings but it carries no guarantee of a single meaning within itself" (237). Any representation of memory, as an indexed symbol, carries the potential to produce "a language of argument, not a chorus of harmony" (197-8). Thus, for former woodsmen like J. F. Wilcox, an eighty-four year old African-American man from Ludowici, Georgia, the messages Carter's symbols are intended to convey would likely be drowned out in dissonance. If the industry were to return to the United States, Wilcox says, he would not return to it:

Nobody ever enjoyed going out there and working in grass knee-deep and water and mud and things. There wasn't enjoyment in it...It was just a lot of hard work for no money...It was just something that had to be done. Anybody who come up back in them days, they learned you had to work for a living, wasn't no way out. Wasn't no scheme to pull like they do now...Work, there wasn't nothing else. I was glad to get out of [turpentine]. I didn't miss it...I didn't miss it at all. I got out of it quick as possible. (Wilcox 2004)

Clearly, there is no room for Carter's brand of nostalgia in Wilcox's memory. When Carter's type of expression is contextualized and placed in the social and racial framework of its history, it can take on different meaning. It is clear in the reflections of many African Americans that their memory of the work differs substantially from that of many whites in the industry. In terms of tangible symbolic representations of memory like Carter's catfaced pines and museum of tools and equipment, former black woodsmen would be more likely to point to such sights as the shanty homes in which they and their families were housed in the turpentine camp or to their threadbare clothing and brogan shoes from the days of work in the woods. For some, the symbols in Carter's Willacoochee lawn conjure up images not of a peaceful agrarian lifestyle in a noble trade, but of sweat, poverty, even racist violence in an oppressive Jim Crow occupation.





Former turpentine J. F. Wilcox and his wife Bernice lived on turpentine camps in South Georgia for most of their lives prior to the industry's decline in the 1970s. They reside today in Ludowici, Georgia.

Many black workers with whom I have spoken do indeed speak at length of these injustices and the work they performed with a sense of pride, but this is usually for having labored in an occupation and under conditions about which many of today's workers—white or black—know little. They express nostalgia for the work ethic associated with past societal norms, but rarely do they convey a nostalgic hope for the industry's return.

This lack of homogeneity is essential to an understanding of memory and vernacular activity with concern to the turpentine industry. The turpentine experience cannot, and never could be, conceptualized as a categorical experience undifferentiated by social constructions and hierarchical divisions, such as race. Folklore is not always the collective activity of a group, nor do its expressions serve as umbrella statements to convey the mutual concerns of all members. Bauman notes that folklore is rarely "a collective representation of the participants, pertaining and belonging equally to all of them." Rather, it is often "differentially distributed, differentially performed, differentially perceived, and differentially understood." "Vernacular expression," Bauman continues, "may be as much an instrument of conflict as a mechanism contributing to social solidarity" (Bauman 38).



But one of the most important functions that Carter desires of his trees should not go unnoted: to somehow bridge the very divisions that factionalized the industry. Rather than attempting to portray a purely idealized version of the past, he hopes that his trees may also serve to achieve a degree of unity among turpentiners, white and black, that did not exist when the industry was active (G. Carter). Under the banner of shared struggle and a common past, Carter's trees are also an effort to find a method of remembering that neither idealizes nor dismisses the complex and controversial history of the industry. Like in Linkon and Russo's *Youngstown*, Carter and others in the turpentine industry wish "to remember the past as at once meaningful and painful, a source of pride and a tool for understanding community problems" (Linkon and Russo 245). Friends with some of the same men he and his father employed on their land years ago, Carter reflects upon the racial friction of the past and his own attitudes toward race:

I just ain't got nothing but something good to say about blacks. The only thing different in a black and a white is the color of their skin. And I think a lot of times people look down on the black people and call them 'tar heels' and 'turpentine niggers' and you want to about think of them as being the very lowest employed people. But when you *really* learn their history, when you *really* learn what all they went through, when you even take into consideration that they didn't even have an outhouse, they just used a pile of gallberries or dog fennels or palmettos, your heart has to bleed...I hope of the lot of the black educated people will look back on their great-grandparents and they won't look back with a ugly thought. I hope they would look back with a thought of admiration for people that went through the toughest of times—and *survived* it...And my heart just kind of bleeds when I think about how tough it's been for some of them...Because I've seen the hardships that they've endured. I've seen the manual work that they've done. I've seen them when there wouldn't be a dry thread on their body from working. There's been a lot of hard work, a lot of sweat dropped in these old piney woods...People that's labored and worked so hard that's done forgotten. But the good Lord knows each and every one of them. And they're all counted. (G. Carter)

So the range of potential meaning inscribed within the symbolic representations of Carter's memory grows even more complex.

Carter is not alone when it comes to present-day commentaries and critical thought on the racial history of the turpentine industry. In fact, one of the most interesting examples involves the late Dub Tomlinson, a white former woods rider from Echols County, Georgia



known for his talent as a storyteller, songwriter, and musician. In 2003, just a couple of years before his death, Mr. Tomlinson surprised Dr. Laurie Sommers, Director of the South Georgia Folklife Project, with an original song entitled "Turpentine Blues" that he had recorded in his home. The song, keep in mind sung by a former woodsrider (one of the most formidable characters in the turpentine drama according to many former workers), is sung from the perspective of an African-American worker. "Boss man, boss man," Tomlinson sings, "have a good heart / Don't shorten my pay 'cause my skin is dark." The black worker in his song continues, "Ain't got no house, just this little old shack / But that's how it is when your face is black." "Woe is me, woe is me," the worker declares, "going from tree to tree / A troubled mind in the hot sunshine, working that turpentine." How did this troubled black soul with "holes in my pockets, holes in my shoes" and who's "got them working this turpentine blues" come to find a place in the creative imagination of a white former woodsrider (Tomlinson 2003)? Clearly, an important act of memory, commemoration, and understanding has occurred. Tomlinson's song is another example of turpentiners using the past as form of present-day reconciliation. It serves as an observation that may at first glance seem purely nostalgic, even contrived. But under closer scrutiny, and when placed alongside the many forms of commemoration among former turpentiners, the song's local social commentary comes into clearer view.

For some, the disappearance of the industry and its coinciding socioeconomic context is nothing short of a relief and in some instances has even meant a new-found encounter with relatively gainful employment in other vocational spheres. The relative economic improvement enjoyed by many African-American men and women since the industry's decline may thus in part explain the absence of much nostalgia for the work and the life associated with turpentine. But to avoid establishing an oversimplification in the binary portrayal of race, it should be noted that even a division along the lines of white and black can be misleading. Communities ostensibly bifurcated on the basis of race alone are often shown to feature divisions *within* these categories as well (Roberts 222). Like the disparate statuses of field and house slave in the antebellum South, privilege among African Americans in the turpentine industry often depended upon the specific task assigned, shade of skin, and talent in the woods.

This privilege has, in some cases, impacted memory, as it did for another former woodsman, Junior Taylor. Taylor, a resident of Blackshear, Georgia until his death in January 2004, occupied a unique



position in the hierarchy of turpentine labor. Socially, he was thrust into the racial category of “black,” but he was granted a respect in the occupation unknown to most African-American laborers, a fact explainable only through a certain level of speculation on the politics of skin tone. Taylor’s father was, in Junior Taylor’s words, “half white” and had skin of a color such that he could “pass” as a white man whenever it was necessary. Although he recalled hardships much like those heard in many accounts of other black woodsmen, Taylor also waxed nostalgic on the industry’s demise and boasted of his talent in the woods, a talent that earned him the nickname “Iron Man.” With hopes strikingly similar to Gillis Carter’s, Taylor wished that he had pictures of himself in the woods so that he could “make a movie” (2002) in order to educate the youth and future generations on the importance of the work and the hardships he and so many others endured (Prizer 79).

This impulse to memorialize the industry or one’s work in it is found not only on the individual level, but also in more collective community efforts at commemoration. Every fall since 1982, the small town of Portal, Georgia has hosted the Catface Country Turpentine Festival and parade, a community celebration that draws together both former turpentiners throughout the region and other men, women, and children from communities whose economies once depended on turpentine labor. Each year, a crowned and sashed “Miss Turpentine” waves to parade goers as she is carried down Main Street through the town whose welcome signs proclaim it as “The Turpentine City.” The festival highlights the fact that though the industry, like the American South itself, was racially and socially stratified, it did integrate community members in a common social and economic system, and it demonstrates that many former woodsmen consider the industry an important part of their cultural heritage (Persico 1).

Former turpentiners view the festival as an opportunity to educate the current generation on the turpentine’s life and labor. The annual celebration also provides a chance to engender community pride and reaffirm community identity. But as the late anthropologist Richard Persico has argued, “the apparent racial and social divisions of the past persist” (5). Persico points out that:

Although the majority of the turpentine workers in the area were African Americans, most of the old-timers who attend the festival are white. Workers of both groups tell the same kind of stories. Both tell of hard, hot, dirty work. Both have stories about encounters with snakes



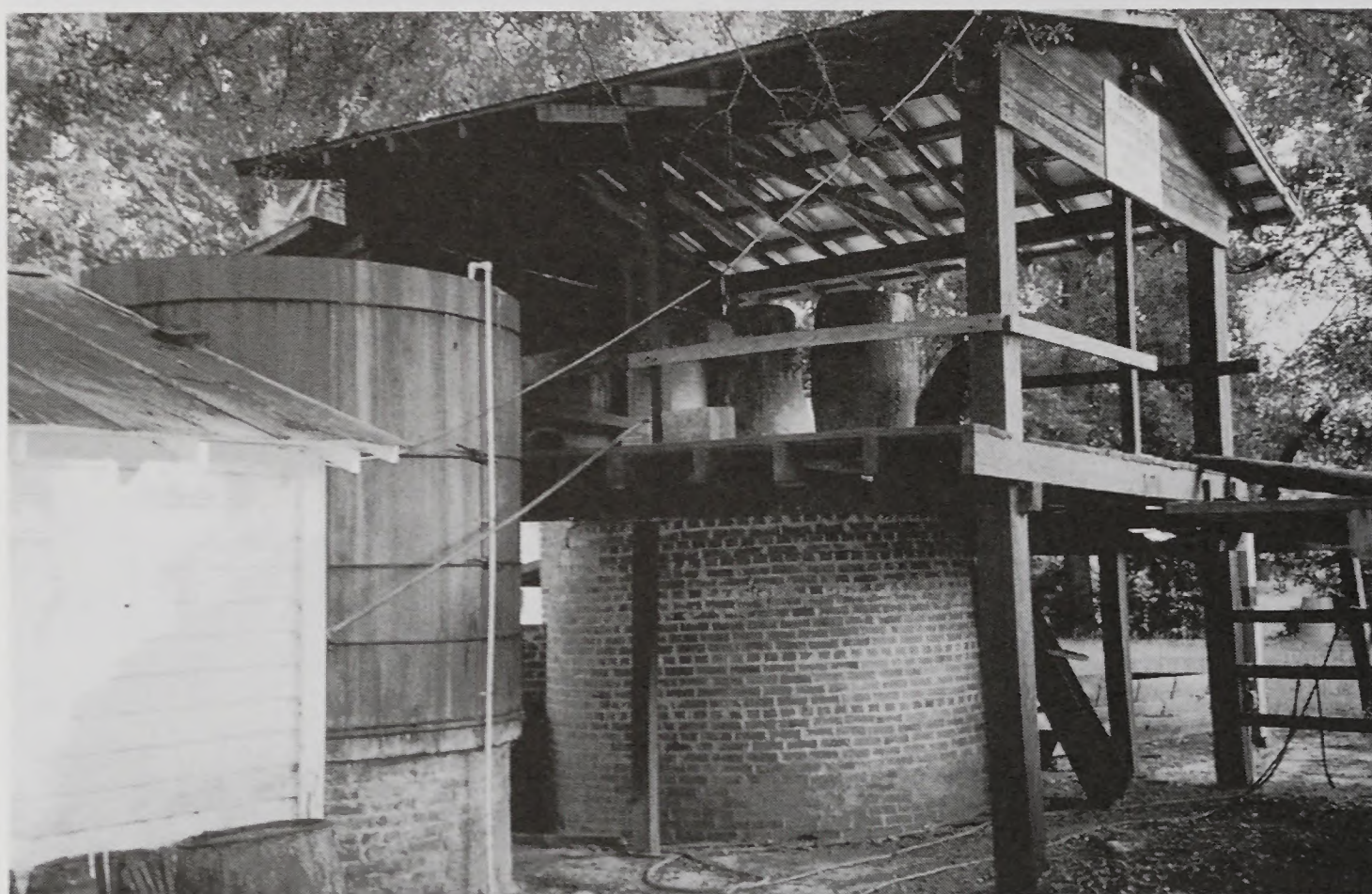


The welcome sign to the small community of Portal, Georgia dubs the town "The Turpentine City." Portal is home to the Carter Turpentine Still and the Catface Country Turpentine Festival, held each fall since 1982. Photo by Timothy C. Prizer.



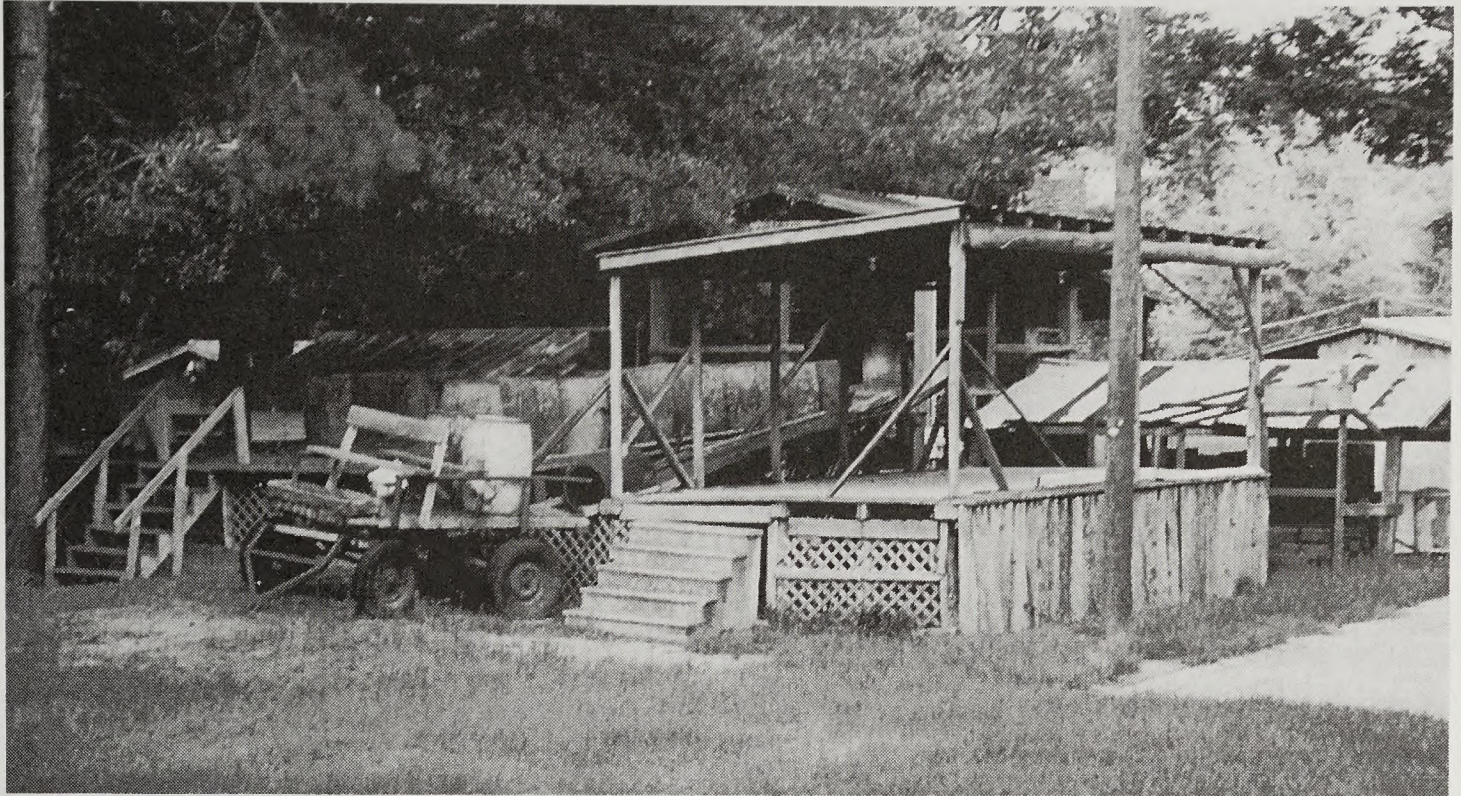
One of the permanent structures on the site of the Carter Turpentine Still in Portal, Georgia is this building, which welcomes Catface Country Turpentine Festival goers to "Catface Country." Photo by Timothy C. Prizer.





The Carter Turpentine Still in Portal, Georgia, erected in 1930, stands unused today on the grounds of the Catface Country Turpentine Festival. The still is fired each fall as part of the festival ceremonies. Photos by Timothy C. Prizer.





Stage for Catface Country Turpentine Festival. Photo by Timothy C. Prizer.



On the site of the Carter Turpentine Sill in Portal, Georgia, is this sign. Alton Carter of Racepond, Georgia is trying to continue the tradition of using turpentine as a medicinal aid by making the product on his own and offering it to the public as a remedy for various ailments. Photo by Timothy C. Prizer.



and other animals. Both remember, "owing their soul to the company store." Yet, it is the European Americans who seem most interested in celebrating the heritage of turpentining." (5-6)

Thus, in collective forms of memorialization as well, we see that "although the people of the community celebrate a common heritage, they differ in how they remember that heritage and in how it shapes their sense of community identity" (Persico 1). African-Americans' involvement in the festival, Persico notes, "is not proportional to their role in the history of the industry" (6).

Despite the divisions with concern to memory and identity that exist within the turpentine industry, former turpentine workers today share a common social, economic, historical, and physical space. Most former turpentiners live today in the same small towns of their birth in the Wiregrass region of southern Georgia and northern Florida. And far from any isolation that could be applied to them, turpentiners now, as they always have been, are profoundly impacted by global forces—an extension of the same forces that brought their occupation to the New World via Jamestown and shipped it back via Baxley nearly four centuries later. Turpentiners are not alone in the struggle to create meaning and a sense of community in an increasingly chaotic world. Like steelworkers in Ohio or countless others in occupations around the globe, they are part of an international discussion about the meaning of work and place in a postindustrial society. They are far from alone in their effort to understand the relationship between past, present, and future in outsourced, declining, or otherwise defunct occupations.

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2006 W. Amos Abrams Prize

## Bluegrass Pioneer: J.C. Kemp and the Musical Progression Toward Bluegrass in Ashe County

By Josh Beckworth

When I first decided to record the music of J.C. Kemp, a locally known bluegrass banjo player from Ashe County, North Carolina, I was unaware of his overall significance as part of the musical culture of the central Appalachians. What I discovered upon interviewing and recording ensemble performances was that he represents on an individual level a large-scale musical transformation that took place during the 1950s.

Kemp began playing three-finger style banjo at a period when bluegrass music first began to become popular in a region that had until that time been dominated by older forms of music. His early influences and experiences as a performer have resulted in a playing style and repertoire that are a testament to the early sound of bluegrass, a sound that was firmly rooted in traditional influence. Neil Rosenberg defines bluegrass as “a form of string band and vocal music, with strong ties to Southern folk music traditions” (“Bluegrass” 89). This unique, yet very traditional style, arguably began to emerge as

*Frame photo: J.C. Kemp and other musicians at the Buffalo Church Revival, 2003, Ashe County, N.C. Photo by Josh Beckworth.*

*Josh Beckworth is a graduate student in English at Appalachian State University. His essay on J.C. Kemp developed from a paper in an advanced folklore course with Cece Conway and is part of an ongoing study of Ashe County, North Carolina musicians.*





J.C.'s father (fiddle), Maggie Ray (banjo), Clint Lewis (banjo-uke) and other unidentified players on the porch of the Buffalo Tavern, 1935. Photo courtesy of J.C. and Lynn Kemp.

an independent genre in the late 1940s when Bill Monroe and the Blue Grass Boys began playing with the addition of Earl Scrugg's three-finger style banjo technique. However, the large-scale movement to bluegrass among local musicians did not occur until several years later, when, with the help of increased television and radio airplay, bluegrass music became widely available to the masses. Rosenberg writes that "many of the new groups playing [bluegrass] appeared during the first half of the fifties" ("Bluegrass" 95). It was during this period, which Rosenberg goes on to refer to as the "Golden Era" or wellspring of "traditional bluegrass" ("Bluegrass" 95), that Kemp was exposed to the new musical style.

Rosenberg characterizes the early followers of bluegrass as "rural working class people from the Southern Appalachians and other parts of the Upland South" ("Bluegrass" 90). It was here that musicians like Kemp first began playing bluegrass, which they saw as a "modern Southern mountain folk music" ("Bluegrass" 89). Although this new genre had been introduced from the outside, it was eagerly embraced by the musicians of the Upland South like Kemp, who lived in an environment rooted in the same musical influences that had contributed to bluegrass' initial development. J.C. Kemp's playing style and repertoire are results of these influences.





Young J.C. and horse. Photo Courtesy of J.C. and Lynn Kemp.

Although bluegrass music arose as a result of different traditional musical styles being blended together, there are two specific musical forms that Rosenberg believes embodied “strongly held traditional values which strengthened the ties of bluegrass with older musical forms” (*Bluegrass* 231). He believes these two all-important musical forms were “old time fiddle music and gospel singing” (*Bluegrass* 231). The combination of old-time string-band instrumentation with the vocal styling often found in gospel music has been largely responsible for the modern bluegrass sound. J.C. Kemp was also impacted by these two important genres, which existed in abundance in the central Appalachians.

Like many traditional musicians, Kemp’s first exposure to music came from local players whose style and repertoire had been passed from one generation to the next. Kemp’s father, Cliff Kemp, was an old-time fiddle player whose home was used as a gathering point for many of the local musicians living in and around the Buffalo community. Kemp recalls that his father was occasionally visited by G.B.





J.C. and his father, Cliff Kemp. Photo courtesy of J.C. and Lynn Kemp.

Grayson, a highly influential fiddler and recording artists of the late 1920s. It was within this climate, prior to any exposure to bluegrass, that Kemp first developed a musical interest and began playing rhythm guitar. This period of traditional influence also helped to shape Kemp's repertoire later in life. Traditional songs like "Lonesome Road Blues," "Bury Me Beneath the Willow," and "John Henry," were all learned by listening to his father's fiddling, and are still regularly played by Kemp both at home and on stage. This conversion of traditional songs acquired from previous generations into bluegrass arrangements was by no means uncommon among musicians of Kemp's generation. Bob Artis writes "many of [the old songs] were rediscovered as folksongs several years ago, but most of the older bluegrass artists learned them from their parents" (3). These early experiences with traditional songs have firmly anchored Kemp in the past. Dur-





J.C. and his parents (Cliff Kemp and Chessie Kemp) in the Buffalo Community, Ashe County, N.C. Photo courtesy of J.C. and Lynn Kemp.



J.C., his parents, and the Parsons family. Photo courtesy of J.C. and Lynn Kemp.

ing an interview, he said that he prefers traditional songs to more modern compositions, and his repertoire remains peppered with these timeless melodies.

Although Kemp prefers traditional songs to more modern ones, upon listening to his recent performances it becomes clear that the musical style he currently prefers to any other is gospel. He gravitates towards local bands that share this interest, and as a result many



of his ensemble performances are comprised entirely of a gospel repertoire. These songs vary from the traditional to the more modern and indicate a wide variety of influences. Kemp told me that he first became familiar with sacred music while singing in church. Many of the songs he learned directly from church participation continue to be performed by Kemp and his band. Songs like "Amazing Grace," "When We All Get to Heaven," and "How Great Thou Art," are standards for the band and all come directly from the Baptist Hymnal. Other selections are equally traditional. Some of these include "Angel Band," which was first recorded in 1927 by the Dixie Sacred Singers, and "On The Rock Where Moses Stood," which was a song first recorded by the Norfolk Jubilee Quartet in 1924, but is also commonly associated with the Carter Family. Both of these songs are traditional compositions, and their presence at the inception of recorded music indicates their timeless popularity. However, many of the songs performed by Kemp and his band are more modern compositions. The song "Using My Bible For a Roadmap," which Kemp plays at almost every performance, whether as part of an exclusively gospel ensemble or not, was written by Don Reno and first recorded by Reno and Smiley for King records in 1951. The song "I Saw the Light," which is performed by Kemp frequently as an instrumental, was originally written by Hank Williams. The wide variety of influences that have come together to comprise the repertoire of Kemp's band reminds us of the presence of gospel music as a dominant force in all forms of music with traditional roots, including bluegrass.

When I asked Kemp about his current musical preferences he said, "I like to play gospel better than anything, I guess." Rosenberg believes that gospel music is an integral part of bluegrass as a whole. He writes that "bluegrass gospel is a form of discourse on the sacred which occurs in a secular context" (*Bluegrass* 231). However, Kemp sees bluegrass and gospel as two separate musical forms. He told me, "[I] used to like to play bluegrass awful good, still like to play a little bluegrass, but I like to play gospel too." This outlook of gospel bluegrass as something existing apart from secular bluegrass has probably arisen from the strong church influence that has played an important part in Kemp's life. Kemp sees the church, as well as the gospel music he associates with it, as a sacred entity, separate from the realm of secularism, a view reinforced by the fact that almost all of his more recent ensemble performances, which consist exclusively of bluegrass gospel, occur at churches or other functions with a religious theme.



Living in an environment rich with both traditional string and gospel music, Kemp needed only a nudge from the outside world to combine the two into a new, yet familiar, musical style. This nudge came in the form of Don Reno, banjo player for the popular bluegrass group Reno and Smiley. The group appeared on the "Top of the Morning Show," which was broadcast daily from Roanoke, Virginia on WDBJ-TV. The fact that Kemp was even able to see Reno on the "Top of the Morning Show" is somewhat unusual and is important for recognizing the impact of mass media, specifically television, on the music of rural Appalachians. The show was broadcast beginning in the mid-1950s, and lasted until 1964, when Red Smiley was forced to leave the group. At the time the show was broadcasting, televisions were somewhat of a rarity among rural Appalachian residents. Kemp recalls that his father purchased one of the first televisions ever seen in Ashe County's Buffalo community. This television soon became a gathering point for the local residents. Kemp recalls that after his family first acquired the television "we used to have a house full watching wrestling ever Saturday." Apart from merely entertaining the local population, the television introduced Kemp to a new form of music that had been steadily gaining popularity since its introduction by Bill Monroe. It also exposed him to the previously unheard three-finger banjo style of Don Reno.

Don Reno was a native of Spartanburg, South Carolina when Snuffy Jenkins first introduced him to the three-finger banjo-playing technique. Jenkins is also responsible for introducing this new style to Earl Scruggs, who later used it to develop the bluegrass sound as part of Bill Monroe's band. The distinction Scruggs earned as the inventor of three-finger playing almost went to Reno, who was originally chosen to be Monroe's first banjo player. Nevertheless, after joining the army, Reno's job went instead to Scruggs. Although he missed the opportunity to be recognized as the original pioneer of bluegrass banjo, Reno went on to successes of his own. After joining forces with Red Smiley, he began writing and recording songs for King Records.

Fred Hill writes that "like many bluegrass performers, Reno and Smiley performed gospel tunes" (62). Initially Don Reno and Red Smiley recorded sixteen gospel songs for King. The Reno original, "Using My Bible For a Roadmap," was among these. Following these first sixteen recordings came a number of other songs on the King label. Rosenberg breaks down these recordings saying that "Half were gospel and the reminder just about evenly split between instrumentals and secular songs" (*Bluegrass* 105).





Young J.C. and his banjo. Photo courtesy of J.C. and Lynn Kemp.

It was at this time that Reno and Smiley began gaining in popularity, soon becoming one of the most well-known bluegrass bands in the country. Their television show on WDBJ, which allowed them to reach a wider audience of people like J.C. Kemp, came as a result of this popularity. Upon seeing Don Reno play for the first time, Kemp became intrigued with this new sound. He soon received a Sears banjo as a gift from his father and Kemp began learning songs by trying to mimic Reno's technique. He also purchased an assortment of Reno records and began playing along with them. After beginning what would become a life-long career as a roofer in 1960, Kemp continued to practice his playing while watching the "Top of the Morning Show" every day before leaving for work.

Although the impact of seeing Don Reno perform began to drive Kemp toward bluegrass and away from the traditional folk sound of



his forefathers, his own father approved. The elder musicians like Kemp's father, who learned through traditional means, supported their children's decision to adopt the rapidly advancing sound of country and bluegrass music. Although younger musicians chose to forego much of the repertoire and technique of their musical ancestors, the fact they were playing in a traditionally inspired form was a sign of their desire to continue the musical legacy of their parents. In the eyes of the musicians living at the time, the bluegrass genre was not a destructive new force, but rather an inevitable transfiguration, one that would serve to continue the orally transmitted legacy of Appalachian music.

The fact that J.C. learned from Reno makes the importance of mass media to rural musicians clear. Without the acquisition of a television, Kemp probably never would have begun playing bluegrass. He told me that he had been playing guitar early in his life and would have continued to play a more traditional form of music had he never been exposed to Don Reno. However, the new form of music he heard being broadcast on the "Top of the Morning Show" redirected his musical efforts and allowed his style to evolve away from the "old-time" music of his forefathers.

It is important to recognize that this musical mutation is not confined merely to musical culture on a local level. The phenomenon of musical style being shifted and refined by outside forces was responsible not only for the eventual expansion of bluegrass into an independent musical genre, but also for its initial conception. The ability to carry portable recording equipment began a surge in rural music recordings in the 1920s. Performers like Fiddlin' John Carson, Jimmie Rodgers, and the Carter Family were all pioneers of this new form of music, and laid the foundation for all types of traditionally inspired music that would come afterward. Bob Artis writes, "it was inevitable that the country artists themselves would look to one another's recordings as a means of picking up new techniques and songs" (10). He goes on to say that the three part vocal harmonies of the Carter Family were the basis for the harmony singing that would come to dominate bluegrass. Don Reno himself was a product of recorded music. In an interview with Tony Trischka and Peter Wernick, Reno said that he "started picking up on the Delmore Brothers. They were, back then, real aggressive in flattop picking . . . I was more or less interested in learning something new" (82). Clearly the influence mass communication has had on traditional music is a profound one. By moving away from traditional sounds to the more modern sound-





J.C. playing at the Buffalo Baptist Church Revival, 2003. Photo by Josh Beckworth.

ing bluegrass as a result of television's influence, Kemp was demonstrating a pattern of reshaping traditional music that had existed among Appalachian musicians for decades. He is a perfect illustration of the fact that even the most traditional forms of music are not unchanged but are constantly being reshaped and redirected by outside influence.

Although J.C. Kemp's playing style has been influenced by the music of Don Reno, the two are by no means identical. Bob Artis writes, "the most lasting contribution of the Reno and Smiley sound to the ever-broadening field of bluegrass was the phenomenal banjo



playing of Don Reno” (65). Reno began his career playing a straightforward three-finger style, much like Earl Scruggs, but “by the early fifties he had made it purposefully different” (*Bluegrass* 105). Reno began incorporating musical styles like jazz that existed outside the realm of traditional influence. He pioneered the “single string” style of playing in which the thumb and middle finger alternately pick melody notes on the same string. Reno himself said that he “knew where [banjo playing] could go back in 1950 and I tried to pitch it in that direction. It took me years to get people interested in something besides ‘Cripple Creek’ and ‘Old Joe Clark’” (Trischka and Wernick 83). In this aspect Kemp’s playing style is not parallel with Reno’s. Although Kemp occasionally adds melodic style licks, he never strays too far from the traditional finger roll patterns of bluegrass or the traditional material that characterizes “Golden Era” bluegrass. In this respect his style of playing is more reminiscent of early Earl Scruggs than Don Reno. The similarity between Kemp and Reno comes more from an experimental outlook on music, which drives both performers to use imagination as a key to their playing. Bob Artis writes that Reno is able to “play an imaginative banjo break on anything” (64). When asked how he approaches playing a solo, Don Reno responded that if he plays the tune regularly, he starts “playing it different each time” (Trischka and Wernick 88). When listening to Kemp play the same song repeatedly, it becomes clear that he also relies heavily on variation. These alterations are sometimes just the subtle change of one-measure licks. Sometimes however, Kemp will play using entirely different left-hand finger positions, employing chords that sound at higher or lower pitches than those that are normally used.

Although the ability to improvise imaginative solos on songs is an important aspect of Kemp’s playing, it is not the most important. Don Reno says that “The ability to fit himself in with the group he’s playing with” (Trischka and Wernick 87) should be of primary importance to any banjo player. He also says, “My backup comes inspirationally . . . Sometimes I won’t back the same way twice” (85). The importance placed on interesting yet unobtrusive backup is more important to a performing musician than the ability to play complicated solos, since the majority of time in an ensemble group is spent supporting the other players. It is in this ability that Kemp’s playing truly excels. His familiarity with the fretboard allows him to unobtrusively support the sound of the other musicians, without ever becoming repetitive. When not playing a lead part, he relies more heavily



on “pinching,” or picking several strings in a chord simultaneously, and playing slowed down versions of typically brisk rolls to accentuate the melody of the song. The continuous stream of notes provided by finger rolling is sometimes used in songs with more up-beat tempos. He also moves further away from the bridge when playing to provide a softer and less noticeable sound. These techniques are by no means unique to Kemp, but his years of performing have perfected them to a point beyond that of most non-professional musicians.

The level of perfection obtained in Kemp’s overall ensemble playing has come as a result of a long playing history. Many of these groups have been very casual assemblages of local players who come together occasionally for informal picking sessions or single public performances. Kemp can recall only three professional bands of which he has been a part. Two of them, Mountain Heart and The Fellowship Quartet (the band he currently plays with), were local all-gospel bands. The band that has probably had the most significance to the overall musical scene of the central Appalachians however, was the Virginia-Carolina Boys. This band, which J.C. was a part of during the mid-60s, was formed by Wayne Henderson and Albert Hash.

Hash, who was born in Whitetop, Virginia in 1917, established himself as one of the area’s most well-known old-time fiddlers at a time when that style was the dominant sound of the Appalachians. He is a product of a more traditional learning style than many of the musicians he would later play with as part of the Virginia-Carolina Boys, having learned to play, not by listening to any outside source, but to his great-uncle George Finlay and Corbitt Stamper, another local musician. Although Hash played regularly in the 1940s, he took an extended break from music in the ’50s and early ’60s to seek employment in Lansing, North Carolina. It was at this time that he met the young J.C. Kemp. During this period, Hash also began to teach the art of instrument building to a young guitarist from Rugby, Virginia, Wayne Henderson, who has gone on to great success as a nationally known guitar player and instrument craftsman.

Although Henderson, born in 1947, was younger than Kemp, he was also a product of traditional influence, having learned to play from his father, an old-time fiddler, and E.C. Ball, a local guitarist who ran a country store near Henderson’s home. After meeting Albert Hash, the young Henderson encouraged Hash to start a band and the Virginia-Carolina Boys soon began playing live radio shows on WSKS in West Jefferson. The roster also included Max Henderson, Rector Haire, and Boyd Stewart.



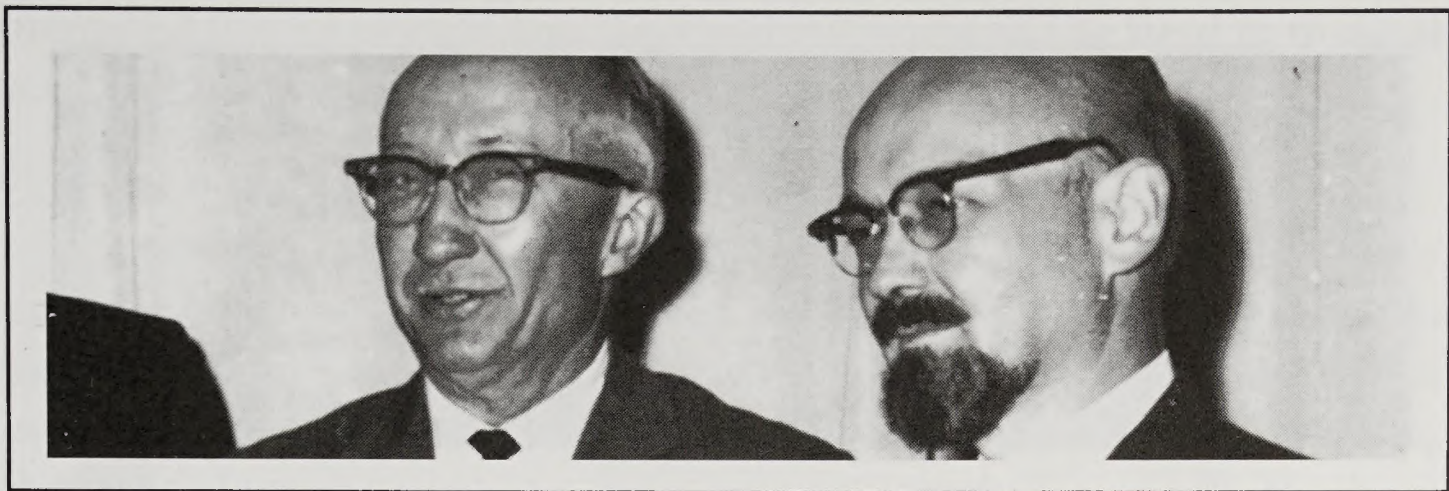
Kemp recalls that this group played predominately bluegrass, which had gradually become the dominant musical style in the area by the mid-1960s. However, during their performances, Hash was also fond of regularly incorporating traditional fiddle songs, which Kemp became very adept at supporting. The band played shows in the region, continued to perform for WSKS on Saturday mornings, and could also be seen on the "March of Dimes Telethon" on WBTV out of Bristol. The time he spent playing with this group of musicians has left Kemp with fond memories and several humorous stories, which are recorded in his interviews. The fact that this group of musicians, who were products of very different musical influences, could come together to form such a successful and cohesive band is a testament to the musicianship of each.

Over the many years he has been playing, J.C. Kemp has never been able to make a living as a musician. Although he plays frequently and is respected as one of Ashe County's best banjo players, he continues to work as a roofer. This fact has kept him out of sight of many music fans, some of whom remain unaware of the great music and performers that can be found in all walks of life. But Kemp represents more than just great music. He is also a remainder of the beginnings of bluegrass. He and his music are the product of a regional culture in transition. He came of age among traditional music sources at a time when those sources were being influenced by new musical styles introduced from a sudden influx of mass communication. With this in mind, Kemp's playing can be appreciated not only for the superb talent of the musician, but also for the musical mutations, both on a nationwide and individual level, that have culminated in a musical style unique to an artist standing far out of the limelight.

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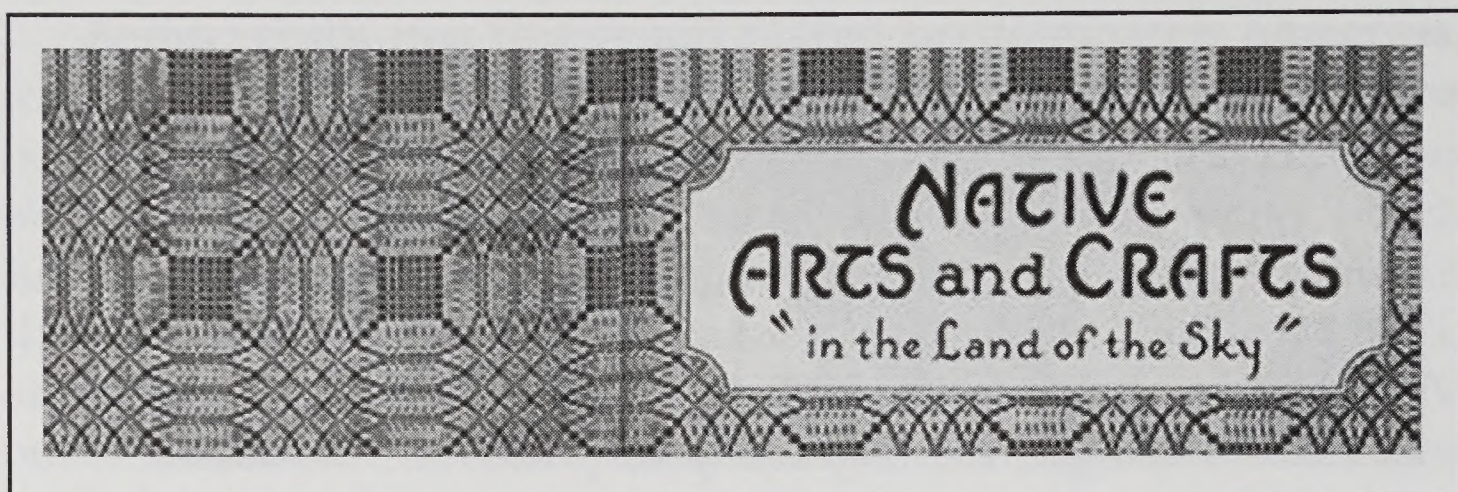


## 2006 Cratis D. Williams Prize

Martha King and Rob Roberts of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill won the 2006 Cratis D. Williams Student Contest, which for the first time recognized a multi-media production. Their collaboratively produced video, *Madison County Project: Documenting the Sound*, is available through their website at [www.madisoncountyproject.org](http://www.madisoncountyproject.org). It is also available in streaming format from [www.folkstreams.net](http://www.folkstreams.net).

*Frame photo: Faculty colleagues and fellow ballad collectors W. Amos Abrams (l) and Cratis D. Williams at a ceremony honoring Doc Abrams upon his leaving Appalachian State Teachers College to become editor of North Carolina Education in 1946. (Photo from Appalachian State University Archives). Our Society's student prizes are named for Abrams and Williams.*





## The Folklorist's Digital Toolkit

By M. Anna Fariello

Western Carolina University's Craft Revival project utilizes the latest technology as a preservation tool for documenting a historical regional movement. The primary method used in this project is *digitization*, the making of a digital surrogate from a tangible object or piece of information. This process takes data—a rather impersonal term describing the rich material gathered by folklorists and historians—and converts it into a form of minute numerical digits to be stored, displayed, transferred, and accessed via a computer. Using sophisticated software, this digital surrogate is coded using a controlled and standardized vocabulary. Together, the digital unit—whether made from a photograph, document, material object, sound fragment, or video clip—is mated with informational data to form a searchable record, somewhat like the ones found in the library's card catalog of bygone days. But here the resemblance ends. Digital data is loaded onto a server, recovered via a searchable database, and accessed worldwide from the web.

This article briefly outlines the principles and methods used in a multi-dimensional project centered in western North Carolina. The author hopes to illustrate the role of digital technology as a tool that will increasingly come into play in folklore fieldwork and research. While such contemporary tools don't replace the folklorist's standard kitbag—with tape recorder, camera, and notepad—they do

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provide a way of organizing material gathered in the field to make it accessible for future research and worldwide distribution.

#### CONTENT: WHAT WAS THE CRAFT REVIVAL?

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, mountain craftsmen formed the cornerstone of a revived interest in things handmade to create a movement referred to as the Craft Revival. For the most part, these were not the professional craftsmen of today; rather, they were farmers working during agricultural off periods, mothers making homespun clothing for their families, and local tradesmen providing implements for their communities. They were people who had the talent and ability to make things needed for daily living.

Although the making of handicraft has long been a part of the activities of all peoples, the Craft Revival describes a particular period of time in which this activity was accelerated and attracted national attention. Makers were encouraged to preserve traditional skills and produce work for sale. Craft sales enabled them to upgrade their standard of living, adding the practical—like a washing machine—or the intangible—like a child's education—to their lifestyles. As the revival progressed, craft production became increasingly focused on works for sale. Craftwork, coupled with the growing popularity of mountain tourism, helped to shape the region's economy and culture. Although these craftsmen left few written records of their own, their story survives in samples of their work, in accounts of their sales, and in newspaper clippings celebrating their talent in collections throughout western North Carolina.

#### PARTNERSHIPS AND TRAINING

Although the activities and products of the historic Craft Revival movement are rooted in tradition, the Craft Revival *project* takes a non-traditional approach to its documentation. Funded by the North Carolina State Library, Western Carolina University's Hunter Library is the lead organization in a state Heritage Partners Grant. Funds for this grant come from a little-known Congressional act, the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA). Passed in 1996, LSTA restructured the federal government's commitment to libraries nationwide, having a positive impact on the work of community preservationists. The act provided funds to enhance access to library services in rural communities and to develop programs that encourage sharing and collaboration among libraries and non-profit collecting institutions. In North Carolina, LSTA funds were used to develop the Heritage

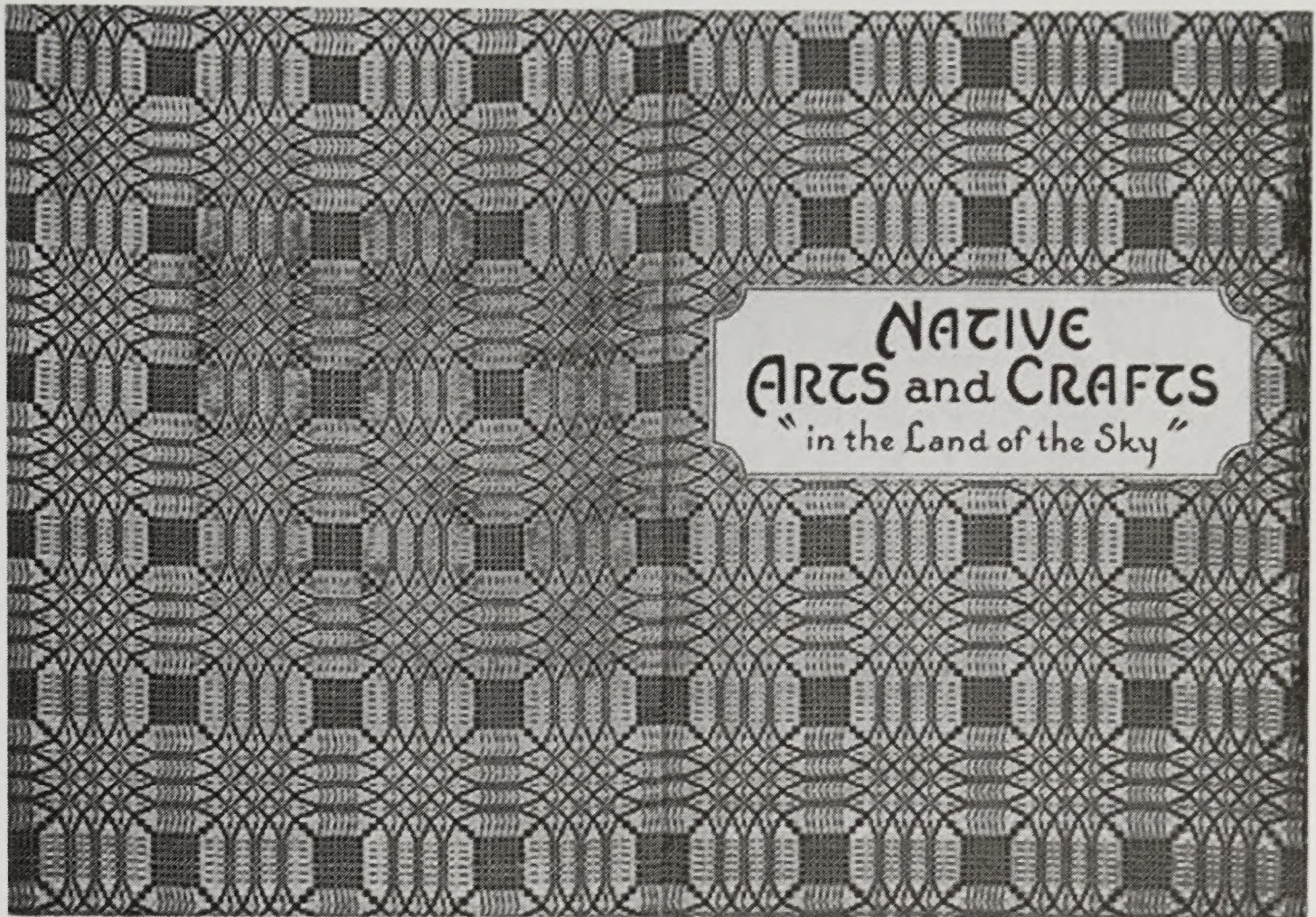




*Basket Makers at work  
I-P-109 Cherokee, N.C.*

Baskets, traditionally made for gathering and storing, were produced and sold during the Craft Revival. Photograph courtesy of Hunter Library Special Collections, Western Carolina University.





*Native Arts and Crafts* brochure is typical of the types of documents that help define the Craft Revival. Courtesy of the Craft Revival project and the Penland School of Crafts.

Partners Grant program, which fosters collaboration and capacity building among regional organizations. Western Carolina University's Hunter Library received one of only two multi-year grants awarded by the North Carolina State Library.

A wealth of objects, documents, letters, photographs, and oral histories concerning the Craft Revival was scattered throughout the region in the archival repositories of craft schools, museums, and local historical societies. These have never been brought together to create a cohesive and complete story of the Revival and its cumulative impact in shaping Western North Carolina and the state. One of the project's goals is to facilitate the more effective use of widely scattered collections, and to promote a better understanding of the interconnectedness of various craft-related entities. Through partnerships created on its behalf, the project aims for a new understanding of the Craft Revival to emerge through comparisons made across disciplines and institutional boundaries. As part of the project, Hunter Library has identified collections relevant to the Revival and is currently working with the John C. Campbell Folk School, the Penland School of Crafts, the Southern Highland Craft Guild, WCU's Mountain Heritage Center, and Hunter's own Special Collections. Over a three-year period, the project will add additional Heritage Partners.



Moreover, an overriding mandate of the LSTA Heritage Partners Grant is that such projects add to the storehouse of best-practice methods used by small and mid-sized organizations. After contributing images and data to the project, Heritage Partners earn both equipment and software that they can then apply to their own organization's uses. During the run of the project, each partner receives training and back-up technological support from the Hunter Library. Thus, at the end of the three-year project period, participating regional organizations will have new tools and updated skills to apply to the care of their collections.

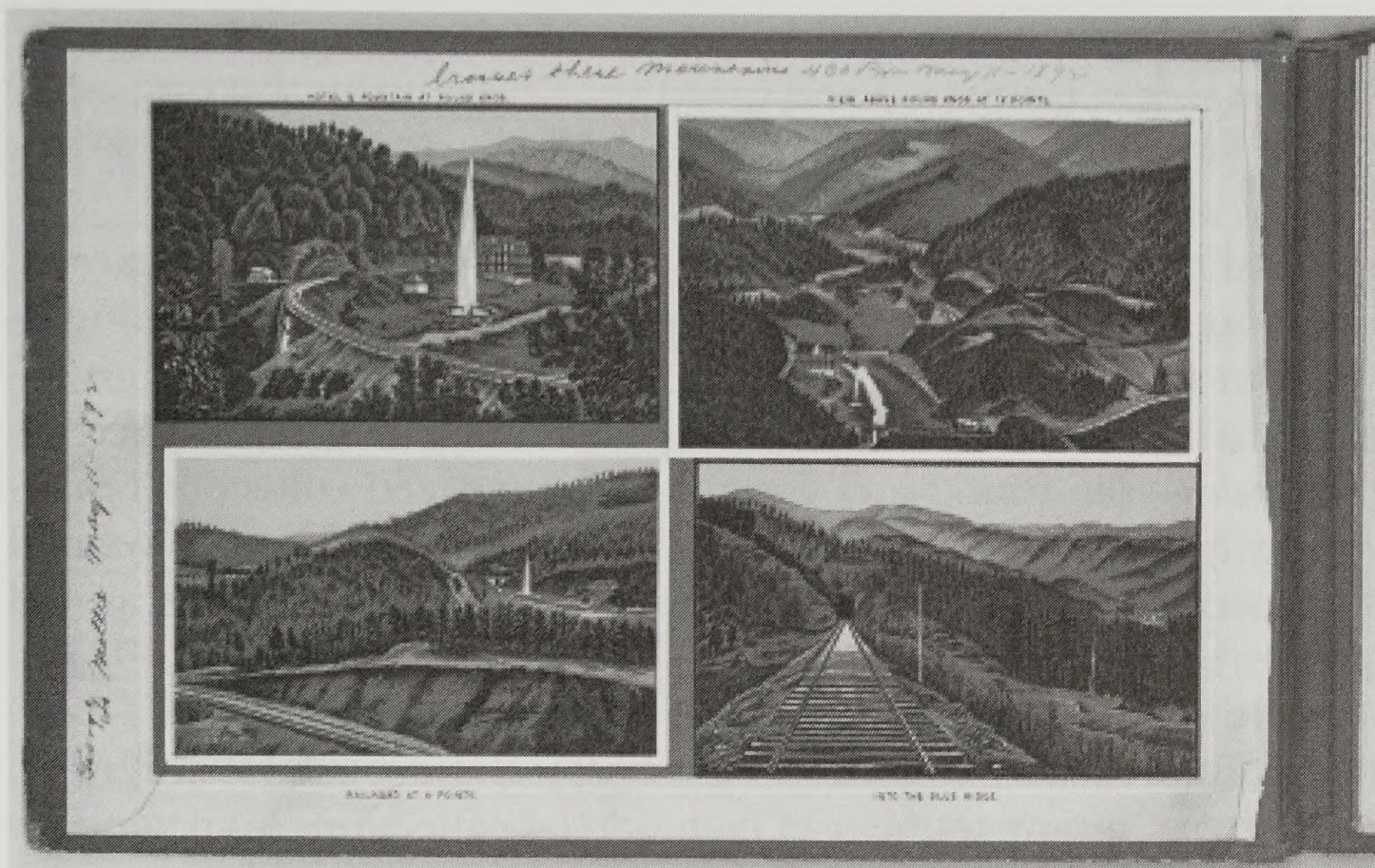
#### NEW TOOLS FOR THE 21<sup>ST</sup>-CENTURY PRESERVATIONIST

The digital toolkit of a 21<sup>st</sup>-century preservationist contains some pretty standard stuff: a computer with the capacity to burn compact disks (CDs), a scanner, scanning software, and a computerized collections management system with a software program capable of linking scanned images with associated documentary data. In the digital world, this associative data is termed *metadata* because it contains data about data, rather than simply information about an object or document. Metadata relies on controlled vocabularies so that search terms are standardized or, at the very least, consistent across the digital collection. Both the project and this paper utilize standards recommended by North Carolina Exploring Cultural Heritage Online (NC ECHO).<sup>1</sup>

The digitization process begins with scanning an item from one of the Heritage Partner's collections. At NC ECHO's suggestion, the project used a three-tier system of digital image surrogates: a *master*, *access*, and *thumbnail* image. Each surrogate has its own purpose and format. To create a master image, an item is scanned at a high resolution (600 dpi)<sup>2</sup> and saved as a *tiff* file. A *tiff* file has the advantage of being uncompressed, that is, all the data is saved in a raw form. Folklorist's might think of a *tiff* file as an original photograph or tape-recorded interview; it is unedited data, uncut and unaltered. The Craft Revival project uses what are called *gold-on-gold* compact disks for data storage. Although the shelf life of a regular compact disk is two to five years, the manufacturers of gold-on-gold CDs claim they can last up to 300 years. Once a master image is burned onto a CD, it is set aside for preservation.

Working digital files—or access images—are scanned at a lower resolution (300 dpi) and saved as *jpg* files. These images are still print quality, but are compressed to take up less space on a CD or





Master images are scanned at a high resolution without cropping or altering in any way.



Access images are cropped and embedded with a watermark before being saved at a lower resolution, stored in the database, and viewed over the web. Both illustrations are from *Western North Carolina R. R. Scenery: Land of the Sky*, a late nineteenth-century travel guide. Courtesy of Hunter Library Special Collections, Western Carolina University.



in a computer or server's memory. And finally, for use on the web, the image is reformatted and saved yet a third time, this time at 72 dpi. This makes a thumbnail image that is compatible with computer screens and allows for fast loading.

As those of us working on the Craft Revival project quickly learned, the most time consuming part of the project is not the scanning itself, but the creation of the associative data to go with it. This required a significant amount of upfront planning; we first had to create data *fields*—the framework for any computerized collections management system—before data input could begin. Fields were defined and ascribed to a database software program that links the scanned images to the input data.

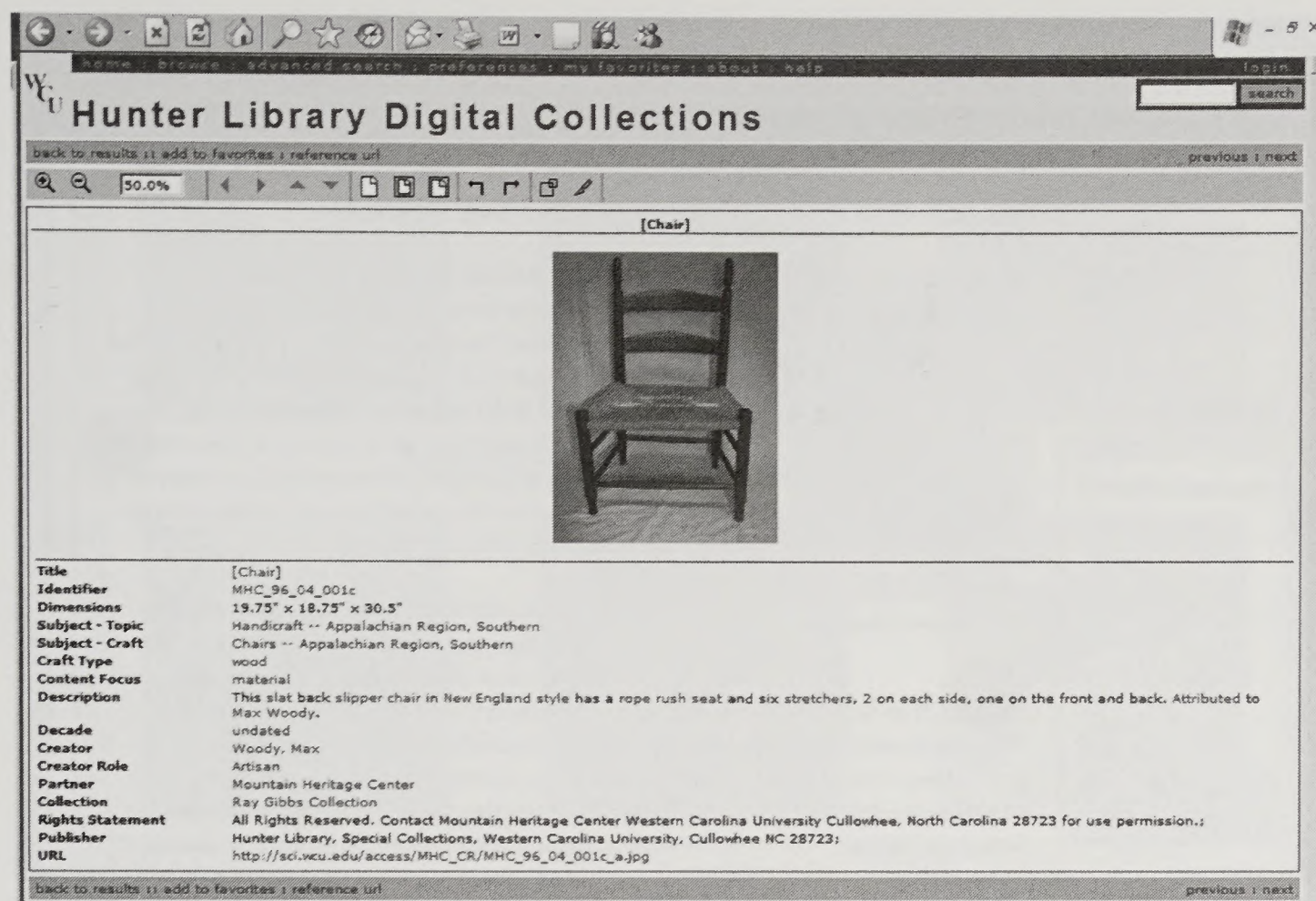
While the Craft Revival project is using Content dm as its database software, other collection-based projects have used Past Perfect, ReDiscover, or any number of commercial collections management systems. Museums and libraries use these and similar software packages to keep track of collections. All of them work essentially the same way, by linking individual collection records to standardized search terms coded into pre-determined data fields. Together, this forms the core database.

Project staff and partners record units of data that tell a researcher or student-user basic information: who, what, where, and when the original item was made. Adopting data fields suggested by NC ECHO, the project collects data entered as Creator (who made the item), Title (what is it), and Date (when the document or artifact was made). Other fields are designed specifically for the Craft Revival project; for example, items that are associated with a particular locale (County) and with the organization that archives it (Partner). Other project-specific vocabularies included *weaving*, *pottery*, and *metalwork* (each entered as Subject-Craft Type) or *Brasstown Carvers*, *Cherokee*, and *Penland Weavers and Potters* (entered as Subject-Group). Finally, there is a free-text block in which the archivist/folklorist enters a full description of the item. All told, approximately twenty data fields are used to quantify information about the scanned item. Thus, descriptive search terms are mapped to particular data fields allowing future researchers to search the database from varied perspectives.

#### ACCESS: CRAFT REVIVAL ON THE WEB

The final product of the Craft Revival project is an on-line resource consisting of a multi-page website set in front of the searchable database. The website tells the story of the historic Craft Revival





The website is supported by an expanding database of images that are linked to an individual data record. Photograph courtesy of Mountain Heritage Center at Western Carolina University.

and its impact on western North Carolina, while the database provides primary resource material for anyone wishing to study further. The website includes active links as part of its storyboard. At the click of a mouse, certain highlighted words take the reader from the web-based storyboard to the database itself. There, readers and researchers can browse or search the selected photographs, letters, pamphlets, records, and objects. Couched in an explanation of weaving, for example, are clickable words that take the reader to images of woven items, booklets about weaving, and photographs of weavers.

The *Craft Revival: Shaping Western North Carolina Past and Present* website<sup>3</sup> aims to provide historical grounding for understanding the context of craft promotion and contemporary economic development initiatives, as well as an appreciation of contemporary craft forms. In this way, the project hopes to enhance research and scholarship opportunities by making resources easier to locate and use. Accessed from the website, historic documents and traditional objects can be viewed by independent researchers, professors, and teachers who wish to include regional material in course curricula. The project provides new, accurate, and useful information to outreach



## CRAFT REVIVAL: Shaping Western North Carolina Past and Present

[Home](#)
[The Story](#)
[The People](#)
[The Crafts](#)
[About the Project](#)
[Resources](#)
[Activities](#)
[Contact Us](#)

**The Story**

Craft Revival

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Pioneer Craft

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A Region Defined

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**John C. Campbell Folk School**

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Penland School of Crafts

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Southern Highland Crafts Guild

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Craft Today


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**The People**

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**The Crafts**

### The Story: John C. Campbell Folk School



**Olive Dame Campbell**

Olive Dame (1882-1954) was brought up in Medford, Massachusetts where her father was head of a private high school. After graduating from Tufts College, she met and married John C. Campbell (1867-1919), a mission schoolteacher. Living and working together as colleagues as much as marriage partners, in 1908, Olive and John left on the first of many trips into the mountains. With support from the Russell Sage Foundation, John collected data, while Olive collected songs. Both were early recorders of cultural conditions in rural life.

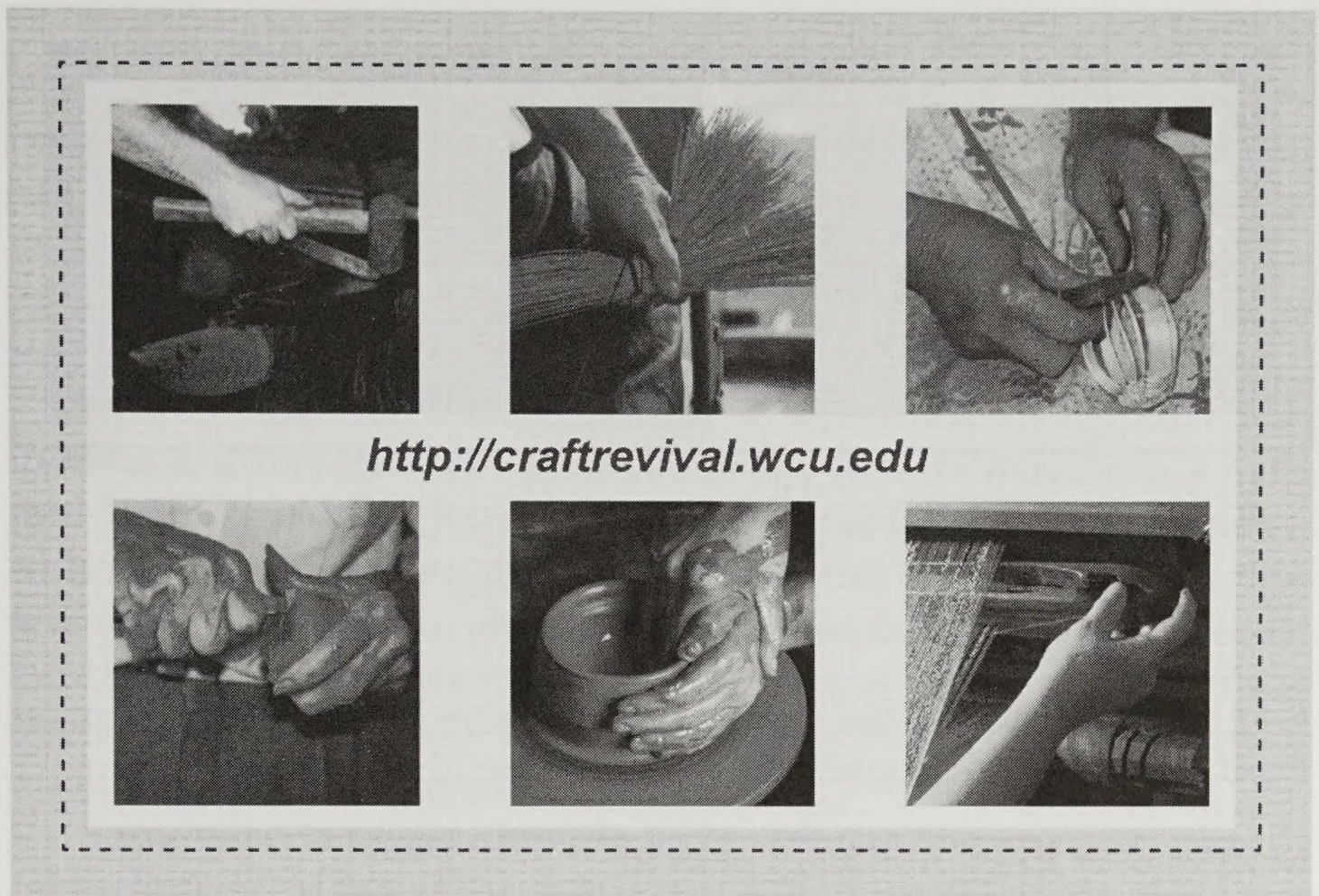
The Campbells were interested a type of ungraded school for young adults—a *folkehøjskole*—developed in Denmark. In the early 1920s, after the death of her husband, Olive Campbell went abroad to learn first hand how hands-on, adult education worked in Scandinavia. With an American-Scandinavian Foundation fellowship, she traveled to Denmark to study the effectiveness of folk schools. Accompanying her was her friend, former Hindman Settlement School teacher *Marquerite Butler (Björstrup)*. Together they traveled to Denmark, Sweden and Finland and returned "with an aim to awaken, enliven, and enlighten the mountain community."

The Craft Revival project website tells the history of each Heritage Partner site. Photograph of Olive Dame Campbell courtesy of the John C. Campbell Folk School and the Craft Revival project.

and marketing communities, to tourism organizations, to local governments and to coordinating groups that operate craft-based economic development initiatives.

Perhaps the most significant goal of the project is to increase awareness of the importance of the Craft Revival to western North Carolina residents and to others across the state. During the Revival, North Carolina makers shaped clay, in turn, shaping attitudes and values that contribute to today's appreciation of the handmade object. Makers wove cotton, linen, and wool, weaving a sense of community that today contributes to a regional sense of place. Craftsmen hammered metal, forging partnerships to effect change. Artisans worked with wood and built a regional economy based on individual talent and entrepreneurship. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, these activities reinforced the value of quality, individuality, and workmanship. They remain evident in a 21<sup>st</sup>-century region that is both dynamic and progressive.





The Craft Revival website can be seen at <<http://craftrevival.wcu.edu>>.

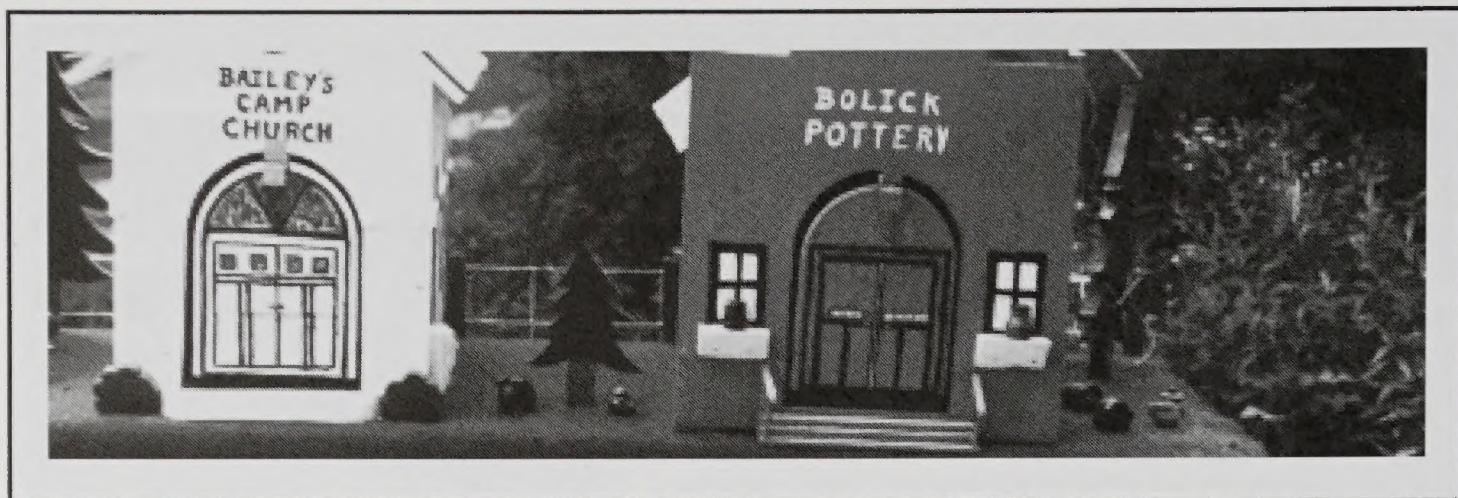
#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> NC ECHO's mission is to promote the use of digital imaging to broaden and enhance access to North Carolina's cultural heritage. NC ECHO maintains an in-depth website that more fully explains state standards for digitization projects, accessed at [www.ncecho.org](http://www.ncecho.org)

<sup>2</sup> Resolution refers to the quality of a scan and is measured in dots-per-inch or dpi.

<sup>3</sup> Accessible from <<http://craftrevival.wcu.edu>>.





## Reviews

*King of Stink: Appalachian Ramp Festivals*. Steve Provence and Sharon Ford, directors. Videocassette. Golden Lion Media, 2004.

Reviewed by Erica Abrams Locklear

Before the release of Steve Provence and Sharon Ford's documentary, anyone interested in learning about ramps had to settle for reading about the fragrant root and its surrounding cultural customs. However, since the release of *King of Stink*, viewers can now journey to eleven different ramp festivals throughout Appalachia. The bulk of the film depicts festival-attendee interviews interspersed with commentary from Glen Facemire, a West Virginia ramp farmer and bona fide ramp expert. This combination allows viewers to understand the different ways ramps are prepared, why anyone would consider eating such a smelly root, and perhaps best of all, the intricacies of festival ramp eat-off competitions.

The documentary's warm, light-hearted presentation makes the piece fun to watch, and viewers will certainly appreciate the range of people interviewed. Provence talks with local ramp-lovers, an employee of the North Carolina Department of Fish and Game, a senator from West Virginia, and the West Virginia Attorney General—almost all declare an undying fondness for the plant. Provence also does well in selecting entertaining interview quotes, such as Rodney Facemire's comment about ramp wine: "You get drunk on that, [and] I guarantee you'll be stinkin'."

*Frame photo: Miniature pottery jugs and animals decorate the handcrafted Bolick Pottery mailbox, Caldwell County. Photo by Thomas McGowan.*



Perhaps the film's most memorable quality involves its detailed attention to food. Provence includes shot after shot of ramp supper fare, ranging from gigantic grills cooking ramp chicken, to vats of ramp pinto beans, to tables weighed down with every ramp dish imaginable. Viewers should definitely watch the documentary after eating, because repeated images of mouth-watering dishes will cause even the most satiated to salivate.

Despite the film's contribution to the study of Appalachian foodways, it has its drawbacks. Primarily, viewers may have a hard time keeping up with the various ramp supper locales and interviews. Although Provence usually signals when the crew moves to a new festival, viewers cannot always match particular scenes with specific locations. A comprehensive list of festivals at the beginning of the documentary would have helped to alleviate this confusion, even if it would not solve it altogether.

Some viewers might also take issue with the documentary's musical inclusions. Many of the suppers and festivals showcase bluegrass music, and much of the documentary includes snippets of traditional Appalachian songs. Banjo-plucking backgrounds ultimately add to the supper presentations, giving viewers an even better idea of ramp festival tastes and sounds. However, when the film makes an abrupt shift to discussions about gourmet chefs and their new-found affinity for ramps, viewers find themselves listening to strangely inappropriate jazz music that strikes a rhetorically discordant note. As a reviewer, I am unsure about the message this musical choice sends, but I have to wonder if it suggests that "high falutin'" ramp recipes, chefs, and restaurants simply do not "go" with Appalachian music. Such a possibility could imply a cultural, and even socio-economic, dichotomy that the documentary could have done without.

Despite these issues, *The King of Stink* nevertheless provides a new visual spin on an old mountain favorite. Viewers will surely understand that ramps generate much more than bad breath—they result in suppers, festivals, eat-offs, and even a Maid of Ramps beauty pageant. To order your own copy, visit [www.goldenlionmedia.com](http://www.goldenlionmedia.com) or call (504) 337-1095. To learn more about the documentary and ramps in general (including a recipe for a "Bloody Stinkin' Mary"), visit [<www.kingofstink.com>](http://www.kingofstink.com).



Kristin Johannsen. *Ginseng Dreams: The Secret World of America's Most Valuable Plant*. University Press of Kentucky, 2006. 215 pp.

Reviewed by David N. Cozzo

A botany professor once commented to my Appalachian Biogeography class that if we were blindfolded and dropped off in the mountains of eastern China, we would think we were in the Appalachian Mountains. During the age of the super-continent, Pangaea, the mega-forest was connected throughout the temperate region. When the continents broke up, the pieces of this forest were isolated from each other and the evolutionary process induced changes at the species level. We may see the same genera of plants in eastern China that we find in the Appalachian Mountains, but at the species level we would find one or more distinctly different distinctly different yet visually similar plants. This process of the long-term isolation of plant communities and changes due to the evolutionary process is known as a floristic disjunction. Kristin Johannsen's *Ginseng Dreams* portrays the reflection of this floristic disjunction through the cultural and commercial relationships ensconced in the story of one plant: American ginseng (*Panax quinquefolius*).

When I was first handed this book I thought, "Great! Another book on ginseng. What's left to be said?" Like Johannsen, I got the ginseng bug when I moved to Kentucky. First, I heard friends talk about this mysterious plant and was given some dried root to chew on while working on carpentry jobs. Then I was introduced to it in the field by a mentor. Even the professional botanists I met approach the plant with a sense of awe. Eventually, I found some wild plants on my own. That thrill is hard to describe. But Johannsen comes close to capturing what many of us who have become acquainted with the ginseng plant have experienced. She does this by weaving the weft of the history, biology, culture, and commerce of ginseng and the ginseng trade into a complex tapestry held together by warp of her own enthusiasm for and fascination with this amazing plant.

Johannsen is literally all over the map with this story. From the Hong Kong markets to the farms of Wisconsin, from the festivals of Korea to the back woods of Kentucky, Johannsen follows the mystique of ginseng throughout the range of its floristic and cultural disjunction. But *Ginseng Dreams* is much more than a natural history of one plant. It is a story told through an eclectic array of individuals, each adding a perspective to the complex tale of ginseng.



None of this is an easy task, as knowledge of ginseng is often shrouded in secrecy. It is sometimes harvested on publicly regulated lands or private property; it is portable, valuable, and easy to steal; and it is generally a cash-only business where folks on public assistance can earn a little extra cash. So those who gather it do not want to discuss where they got it, those who grow it do not want their locations known, and those who sell it do not want the extra income to come to light.

However, Johannsen does manage to ferret out quite a bit of the ginseng story. She explores the boom-and-bust cycle of the ginseng trade through those that learned to tame or simulate the wild plant and tied their fate to a fickle market. The ginseng dealers, from the mom-and-pop mountain grocers to the owners of the large botanical warehouses, discuss their involvement in the mysterious international ginseng trade. She interviews conservationists and law enforcement officials involved with the controversies surrounding the over-harvesting and poaching of "America's most valuable plant." In Kentucky, advocates for ginseng see it as both a vehicle for economic development and a tool for forest preservation, as the intact forest is the ideal nursery for the more valuable woods-grown roots. And, finally, she gives voice to the contemporary researchers trying to unlock the complex secrets of the medicinal panacea of ancient and modern China.

*Ginseng Dreams* is not without some minor flaws. The layman's botanical discussion is adequate, but Johannsen mistakenly includes carrots, celery, and parsnips in the ginseng family, Araliaceae (they are in the carrot family, Apiaceae, formerly known as Umbelliferae). But Johannsen is not a botanist and this should have been picked up in the review and editing process. She also succumbs to the over-used term *shaman* to describe the characters in a Korean village ginseng festival. I do accept that this is a personal pet peeve and acquiesce that the term might be appropriate since it was used descriptively for characters in a village theatrical presentation, but since it has been usurped and watered down by New Age enthusiasts to include just about anyone who could conduct a ceremony (preferably with smoldering plant material and a drum) the label *shaman* carries little authenticity.

In response to my own question, "What's left to be said?" I must confess that I found this a wholly worthwhile read. It's not another book about the cultivation and biology of ginseng. There are plenty of other sources available for this information. This is a book about the human relationship to, and fascination with, ginseng. Johannsen



uses the history of ginseng to inform current conditions. If you have ever wondered what the fuss was all about concerning ginseng, get this book. You, too, might get bitten by the ginseng bug.

Margaret Bender, editor. *Linguistic Diversity in the South: Changing Codes, Practices, and Ideology*. Southern Anthropological Society Proceedings, No. 37. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004. 141 pp.

Reviewed by Robert Shanafelt

What is the relationship between language and tradition? Is it necessary for languages to be preserved in order for community identities to be maintained? How are the linguistic practices of minority groups both shaped by political-economic forces and also the product of active decision-making processes of individuals? Given economic constraints, how successful are movements for linguistic preservation? These are just a few of the thought-provoking questions raised by this important collection of essays.

Based on papers given at the annual meeting of the Southern Anthropological Society held in Asheville, North Carolina, in 2002, this volume should be of interest to all who want to sample what editor Margaret Bender calls "challenging new work" in the South "that explores relationships among language, culture, and society in a wide variety of contexts and from an even wider variety of perspectives." This sampling includes work on several dialects of English and efforts to preserve them, analysis of language change among the Muskogee of Oklahoma, and a description of initiatives to preserve the Creek language of the Seminoles of Florida. In keeping with the philosophy of the Southern Anthropological Association, one finds here essays from well-established scholars as well as work from upcoming students. While the non-linguist reader will encounter a certain amount of jargon, this is not too daunting as terms are always well-explained. Furthermore, each of the eight essays is concise, with the longest less than 20 pages in length.

The book begins with Bender's overview of the papers and her discussion of their place in contemporary social theory and in the more specific domain of language studies of the South. She emphasizes that many of the writers are linguistic activists as well as researchers. She herself seems to fit into both categories, and her analysis of the work of others is enhanced by examples from her research with the Eastern Cherokee in North Carolina.



Three articles in the volume should be of particular interest to those with an interest in the Carolinas. Most broad is Blair Rudes's overview of the history of multilingualism in the region. Starting with the early 1500s, he finds that for the next two centuries one was far more likely to hear Spanish or various Indian languages spoken in the Carolinas than to hear English. This obviously does much to dispel the common misconception that the South has always been essentially English-speaking and monolingual. Therefore, he rightly concludes, the new linguistic diversity that has been occurring more recently in the region is in a real sense a *return* to multilingualism.

The two other articles that concern language use in the Carolinas are more specific in scope and more ethnographic in approach. One is Walt Wolfram's "Dialect Awareness in Community Perspective;" the other Christine Mallinson's "Constructing Ethnolinguistic Groups: A Sociolinguistic Case Study." Wolfram also shows himself to be a strong advocate for the view that linguists in general should become active in the preservation of linguistic diversity. From the description he gives of his work to preserve the Brogue or Hoi Toider Speech on the Outer Banks island of Ocracoke and the dialect of English spoken among the Lumbee Native America community in Robeson County, North Carolina, one can certainly say that he has put his money where his mouth is. For example, he has co-written a book for general audiences on the Ocracoke Brogue and earmarked half of all royalties to the Ocracoke Preservation Society. Furthermore, although he says that his work has been less extensive among the Lumbee, he has still managed to help foster their dialect by helping produce a museum display, a video documentary, and a book for general audiences. He has also been an active participant in language workshops for teachers and students. (Those with an interest in Wolfram's perspective on dialect preservation should also find interesting Susan E. Stans and Louise Gopher's discussion of initiatives among the Seminole of Florida to preserve their dialect of Creek by way of a program that offers Seminole children an opportunity to "pullout" of regular classes for language instruction once a week.)

Christine Mallinson's case study focuses on a small sample of black and multi-ethnic Appalachians from Beech Bottom, Avery County, North Carolina. On the one hand, her work challenges the common image that Appalachian speech lacks diversity. On the other hand, it shows that an individual's linguistic characteristics are not simply a product of race. For example, like their white neighbors, younger African Americans in the county tend to add "s" to verbs in the third person singular ("The dog barks.") at a much higher fre-



quency than do their elders, who tend to follow a pattern more typical of African American Vernacular English by dropping the "s." (The dog bark.") Furthermore, she found that most outside listeners in North Carolina perceive the African American residents of Beech Bottom to be white. Along similar lines, although focusing on West Virginia as a case study, Kirk Hazen and Ellen Fluharty's "Defining Appalachian English" also demonstrates Appalachian speech variation. Not only does this work dispel stereotypes of Appalachian English in both written and oral form, but it contrasts them with details of what Hazen and Fluharty call Appalachian *Englishes*.

Several other articles should be useful for those with a more general interest in folklore, identity, and language. In the only article that focuses on details of storytelling, for example, Shana Walton gives examples of how varieties of identities and stereotypes relating to Cajunness are revealed in narrative performance in English. This paper is also of wider significance in that it reveals how stories function to communicate degrees of identity and commitment to such "fuzzy sets" as Cajun, Southern, and American. Ambiguity in speech and identity is also shown by the work of Pamela Innes who writes about the Muskogee of Oklahoma and their changing attitudes towards fluency in Mvskoke as a requirement for medicine-making. Finally, Anita Puckett describes how group labels, "ethnonyms," function to validate particular forms of racial identity among self-described "Melungeons" and "Scotch-Irish" in the South.

One weakness in the book that the editor acknowledges is that it does not contain a paper that focuses on the impact of Spanish in the contemporary South. There is obviously so much to be learned here that an entire volume could be devoted to it. We must await that work from researchers as talented as those found here.

After reading this book, I came away with a greater appreciation of the work of linguists and linguistic anthropologists in the South. However, I also came away with a greater appreciation of the ambiguity or indifference many minority or stigmatized peoples feel about their language traditions. Wolfram is quite open about this situation, quoting a resident of the Ocracoke community as saying, for example: "The only person who worries about the dialect is Walt Wolfram." Those invested in the study and teaching of language obviously have an interest in preserving linguistic diversity. It remains to be seen, however, if that interest is greater than or equal to that of the particular speech communities they are trying to save.



**Levine Museum**  
**Presents New Exhibits and Programs**  
**Exploring Latinos in the New South**

During the past 15 years, Latino immigrant populations have blossomed in North Carolina. A 2004 study ranks Raleigh, Greensboro, and Charlotte, alongside Atlanta, as the nation's fastest growing Hispanic cities. The latest project at Levine Museum of the New South titled *Tradiciones: Latinos in the New South* features new photographic exhibits and related programming that explore the cultures of these New South newcomers.

In *La Virgen De Guadalupe* former Charlottean Diana Molina traces the religious tradition of the Virgin of Guadalupe—Mary, Mother of Jesus, who is said to have appeared in Mexico in 1531. With photographs and pop-culture artifacts, Molina follows celebrations of the Virgin from Mexico City to North Carolina.

*Hispanic Traditions in North Carolina* features the work of Duke University photographer Luis-Rey Velasco. Spending time with immigrant families across rural areas of North Carolina, Velasco has produced evocative images documenting how people are reshaping age-old customs and traditions in a new land.

Additionally, Levine Museum is proud to showcase Alexandra Vilchez' photography from the local immigration rally last spring at Marshall Park entitled *Latinos Salen de las Sombras: Latinos come out of the Shadows*.

The exhibits and related programs will be presented October 27, 2006 through January 21, 2007 and are sponsored by Compare Foods and Allen Tate Realtors.



**Levine Museum**  
***Tradiciones: Latinos in the New South***  
**Exhibit Event**

**La Virgen De Guadalupe:  
The Icon and Her Presence in the New South**

Tuesday, December 12, 7 p.m.

Museum members free; non-members \$4

La Virgen de Guadalupe is revered as the patron saint and Queen of all México and her Saint Day, December 12, is the most important holiday in Mexico where millions of pilgrims converge on the Mexico City Basilica to honor her. Today, with our growing Hispanic population, the Virgin has made her way into the New South. Magdalena Maiz-Peña, Professor of Spanish at Davidson College, leads a discussion about the Virgin's history and her presence in the New South today.

**About Levine Museum of the New South**

Levine Museum of the New South was founded in 1991 to preserve and present the diverse history of the American South since the Civil War, with a focus on Charlotte and the surrounding Carolina Piedmont. As an institution deeply committed to using history to build community, the museum presents exhibits and programs that provide historical context to contemporary issues, raise important questions, spark dialogue, and bring people together to share their stories and foster understanding. Located at 200 E. Seventh St. in uptown Charlotte, NC. For more information, visit <http://www.museumofthenewsouth.org>.



## Available Back Issues

Various back issues of the *North Carolina Folklore Journal* are available from the North Carolina Folklore Society. Go to <http://www.ecu.edu/ncfolk/backissues.htm> for a complete back issue list. The Society offers sales of individual issues including multiple purchase discounts, special offers with memberships, and topic specials.

To order back issues, list back issues and their prices, or print out the PDF form at <http://www1.appstate.edu/~ncfolk/ncfjorderblank.pdf> or Word document at <http://www1.appstate.edu/~ncfolk/ncfjorderblank.pdf>. Mail the order with check made out to North Carolina Folklore Society to NCFS, Box 62271, Durham, NC 27715. Prices include handling and mailing.

### INDIVIDUAL BACK ISSUES AND DISCOUNTS

Individual back issues are priced at \$2 or \$5 per issue. Orders of five or more issues merit a 20% discount.

### MEMBERSHIP SPECIALS

Members joining the Society or renewing their memberships receive a choice of free back issues. Single-year memberships merit one \$2 back issue; two-year renewals merit a \$5 back issue or three \$2 issues. For membership categories and dues, see inside front cover. Send membership dues and back issue list to N.C. Folklore Society, P.O. Box 62271, Durham, NC 27715.

### SOME BACK ISSUES

Volume 24, Number 1: Joseph Clark, *Madstones in North Carolina*. (\$2)

Volume 36, Number 1: Special issue on *A Singing Stream: A Black Family Chronicle*: Filmscript of the Tom Davenport Film *A Singing Stream*; Allen Tullos, Daniel W. Patterson, and Tom Davenport, "A Singing Stream: A Black Family Chronicle," background to the making of the film. (\$2)

Volume 42, Number 1: Adrienne Hollifield, "Family Tradition, Orality, and Cultural Intervention in Sodom Laurel Ballad Singing"; Jane M. Harwell, "Ed Briggs: Reviving a Traditional Craft with a Contemporary Eye"; Ronan K. Peterson, "Singing in Poplar, North Carolina: Zelotes Peterson, Ginseng Hunter" (\$2)

Volume 45, Number 1: *The North Carolina Coastal Folklife Survey* (a report of an extensive fieldwork project in Beaufort, Bertie, Dare, Hyde, Tyrrell, and Washington counties). Wayne Martin & Beverly Patterson, "The North Carolina Folklife Survey: A Preface"; Chapters: Sense of Place, Occupation, Community Life, and Domestic Life edited by Beverly Patterson and based on the fieldwork and analysis of Jill Hemming, W. T. Mansfield, and Ann Kaplan; survey conclusions and recommendations and programming suggestions. (\$5)

Volume 46, Numbers 1-2: *Comprehensive Index of the North Carolina Folklore Journal: 1961-1998*. Complete listing of articles, alphabetical authors list, and exhaustive topical index. (\$5)

Special Publication: Scotty Wiseman, *Wiseman's View: The Autobiography of Skyland Scotty Wiseman*. New corrected edition of NCFJ 33.1-2 with updated introduction by William Lightfoot, additional photographs of Scotty and Lulu Belle Wiseman, and an afterword by Thomas McGowan. (\$5)

For a complete back issue list, go to <http://www.ecu.edu/ncfolk/backissues.htm>.





*Featuring*  
Photographs by Diana Molina

*Articles on*  
Irene & Joan Moser  
Gary Carden  
Nelia Hyatt and Mrs. Hyatt's Oprahouse  
Georgia turpentine folklife  
Bluegrass pioneer J.C. Kemp of Ashe County  
Digital archiving of Crafts Revival materials  
Book and DVD reviews

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